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BACK FROM MOSCOW

MR. CHURCHILL and Mr. Roosevelt have both spoken. Both have restated Allied determination to hasten the creation of that Second Front without which victory would seem indefinitely postponed. Mr. Roosevelt has spoken of a dozen different places on which an attack might be launched, and Mr. Churchill, impressed by the "inexorable and inflexible resolve of the Soviet Union to fight Hitlerism to the end," told the House of Commons that he believed he had convinced Stalin of the "loyal and sincere resolve" of Britain to bear a larger share of the burden of the German attack than Britain has done during the last twelve months. On this matter Mr. Churchill was refreshingly frank. He did not pretend that he and Stalin had enjoyed a honeymoon party; he referred to the rugged power of Stalin's personality, to his courage, will and lack of illusions, and to the sense of humour which, one gathers, saved their relationship. Mr. Churchill admitted that it was not surprising, in view of the suffering imposed by the German invasion and the weight of the Nazi attack, that Stalin should feel that neither Britain nor America has done enough so far "to take the weight off them." Of the various reasons for this failure Mr. Churchill reasonably emphasised a factor which is too seldom understood. "We are sea animals, and the United States are to a large extent ocean animals. Russians are land animals." Fortunately, he added, we are all three air animals. When all allowances have been made for the prejudices which have interfered with full co-operation between Russia and the Western democracies, all the traditions of training which have made the concept of European liberation so difficult for the British people, it is true that great land Powers do not readily comprehend the problems of strategy and man-power of a country whose capacities and indeed existence are conditioned by the primary need of free sea communications. That, however, does not answer the basic criticism—that the war could only end quickly if the Germans had to face a Western as well as an Eastern Front and that we have failed to create that Front though the opportunity has been apparent for twelve months.

Such considerations are naturally not uppermost in the Soviet Union when the best developed and most fertile districts of Russia are in German hands, and when the most terrible battle in history is even at this minute being fought for the key city of Stalingrad. On this Mr. Churchill was content to remark that it was already September 8th. It is true that every day that the Russians can defend Stalingrad improves the prospects of the United Nations. But it would be a mistake to imagine that weather will materially affect the fighting in this sector of the front for the next two months. It seems clear that the Russian diversions on the Moscow sector of the front have petered out, and that in spite of the losses that must have been inflicted on troops which continuously attack heavily defended positions the Germans have still men and material to wage this battle. There is not a moment's relaxation on the Russian front, not a moment when the people of Russia are not asking how soon the Western offensive will begin.

It is not obvious what M.P.s were expected to say about this or other parts of Mr. Churchill's report of his visit to Moscow and the Middle East. He was right in saying that relations with Moscow have passed the stage of words and will depend on our capacity for joint action. Nor is it surprising that few criticisms or comments were immediately made on Mr. Churchill's references to other fronts. The defence of Malta is rightly regarded as one of those heroic incidents which historians of the past have glorified into mankind's most brilliant achievement, but which we had vainly hoped were no longer necessary to prevent the forcible enslavement of free peoples.

Nor would any responsible Member of Parliament be anxious to comment on the change of command in the Middle East. Only events will prove whether the new appointments in Libya and the Middle East are satisfactory. With longer time to consider Mr. Churchill's speech some M.P.s might well have asked what his reference to the part that Britain could play in the Caucasus meant unless it was in an immediate action in coniunction with the Soviet forces; clearly, if the Russian side of the Caucasus falls there will be little part for the British to play in that area. A more serious point of criticism could have been found in Mr. Churchill's account of the borrowing of transports from America in which large numbers of troops had been taken to the Middle East to replace those who had been captured at Tobruk, and in the desert. If we had believed earlier in the Russian defence, and had not preferred an offensive in Libya to one in Europe, should we really have been as short of shipping for the Second Front as is so frequently alleged? To choose for an offensive a front which requires a voyage of three months is a curious form of economy at a time when the enemy's weakest point is only the width of the Channel from our shores. More significant still was Mr. Churchill's very fair claim that the R.A.F. was now a primary factor in beating back Rommel's offensive. We note once again how quickly necessity moves the High Command to steps which before a disaster had been condemned as the advice of amateur strategists. Those who urged that large numbers of bombers should be sent to the Western desert were told that both aerodromes and shipping accommodation to take the equipment were lacking. Yet after Tobruk the bombers arrived, and it is clear that they have played a vital part in checking the large-scale offensive which Rommel had planned. We note, incidentally, that Mr. Churchill spoke with sobriety about the bombing of Germany. There was no foolish boasting about reducing German towns to ashes, nor about reducing the Germans by terror.

Mr. Churchill has not changed. The part of this speech which moved him to eloquent imagery was his description of the strange battle in the Western Desert. Such fighting is to him not the loathsome necessity of our age, but the very essence of romance. Mr. Roosevelt showed himself nearer to the thoughts of the common man in a speech he made last week to a great international gathering of students. He knew the deep scepticism of our generation and he desired to reassure these young men and women from many Allied nations that this time our promises were

not pie in the sky when we die. In unusual terms he spoke of selfish individualists who would again destroy the chances of genuine reconstruction if they got the chance. Capitalism of the New Deal type offers hope while Wall Street offers nothing but debts, unemployment and a repetition of ancient misery. Perhaps Mr. Roosevelt understands, what Mr. Churchill will never understand, that all promises about the future after the war sound insincere unless they are based on changes that are taking place in the war. The future will depend not on what is said now but on the balance of forces when the war ends.

Axis Latinity

The Latin peoples are not so susceptible to mass discipline as the Germans or Japanese. They are probably too sceptical, and certainly too individualistic. There is a good deal of fissuring in the regimes of Mussolini and Franco, and, of course, active resistance to the so-called "Revolution" in France. Last month's purge of the Italian Fascist party need not be taken very seriously: a clean-out of 66,000 party members who had "confused the sacred with the profane"—by which the Party secretary Vidussoni implied that they had obtained jobs through party membership—is not very heavy in a totalitarian state. It no doubt indicates a desire on Mussolini's part to have a reliable party beneath him, and is a faint reflection of Hitler's purges of the S.A. The Spanish dismissals raised some hope that Franco might be taking a less pro-German line, since Suñer was the most ardent and public supporter of Hitler. But it seems that the supposition was unjustified, although Franco may be glad to be rid of a Foreign Minister of equal ambition and indiscretion—and his brother-in-law besides. In fact, the hand of the Caudillo has come down upon both the Falange and the Traditionalist leaders: with the Fascists Suñer and Senor José Luna, the Monarchists General Varelo and Colonel Galarza lose the ministries of War and the Interior. Their successors are soldiers, General Jordana at the Foreign Ministry, General Asensio at the Interior, who both count as moderates. What is more significant is that Suñer and Luna have been dismissed from their positions as President of the Junta of the Falange and Vice-Secretary General of the party; for Franco has taken over its presidency himself. The Falange and the Monarchist-Traditionalists have always been uneasy yoke-fellows: they both support capitalist reaction, but the Catholicism of the Traditionalists clashes with the statocracy of Falangism; it was after a ceremonial mass that Falangists of late waited outside a church at Bilbao to throw a bomb at General Varela. There were personal rivalries, too. Franco might justly say: "Passions and evil are again rearing their head; divisions, cliques and cabals are beginning to reappear." He has taken the classic dictator's way with overmighty followers, cutting off the poppy-heads. As to France, Laval's pogroms, whose horrifying details are now known, have alienated large sections of Right Wing Catholic opinion. Not even Vichy can call the Archbishop of Lyons a Communist—and Cardinal Gerlier wrote a diocesan letter read by many of his priests from the pulpit calling upon Christians to shelter Jewish children. Priests are among those arrested for this offence; and General de Vincenne, the military governor of Lyons, was dismissed for refusing to order the troops to reinforce the police in rounding up Jews. Three hundred of the Paris police have been dismissed for the same reason. Yet the horror goes on. Small children are sent to Germany or to reformatories; their parents are being handed over to the Gestapo. The scenes in the Jewish hospital of Paris, where the sick were hauled out of bed, and women threw themselves and their babies out of the windows pass belief. Especially in France, which has been the refuge of the persecuted more than any other country in the last generation. Vichy, in this Jewish policy and in the surrender of naturalised foreigners to Germany, has debased French tradition.

Women in the A.E.U.

The decision of the Amalgamated Engineering Union to admit women members—made by a very large majority on a postal ballot vote—may mean much or little, according as it is actually worked. At present, the majority of the women in the munition factories are unorganised; but both the Transport and General Workers' Union and the General and Municipal Workers' Union have enrolled considerable numbers, especially in the Government factories. These two Unions have, of course, a large membership among the less skilled male engineering workers, who are also catered for by the A.E.U.; and they will not be best pleased if the A.E.U. now proceeds seriously to invade their domain. It has, however, to be borne in mind that the number of women munition workers who can be regarded as directly replacing skilled men is small; and if the A.E.U. in practice confines its efforts mainly to enrolled women of this type, the other Unions will not much object, and nothing very big will happen as a result of the new decision. Only if the A.E.U.'s change of policy means that it is really setting out to become an inclusive industrial Union, catering effectively for all grades of engineering workers, are any startling results to be expected—among them, a formidable clash with the Unions enrolling general workers. Most probably, the actual policy followed will be somewhere between the two extremes, and will vary from district to district, according both to the character of local production and to the existing local strength of the Unions concerned. It has always been an anomaly that in the engineering and kindred industries, skilled and less skilled workers have in the main been organised apart. This situation arose, of course, at a time when the craft Unions, headed by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers—the predecessor of the A.E.U.—were open only to skilled craftsmen and apprentices, and the less skilled machine-minders had either to go unorganised or to join a Union catering for general workers. Then the A.E.U. opened its ranks to the less skilled men, but made no great national effort to secure them. This left the A.E.U. poised midway between craft and industrial Unionism.

Will the Women Stay After the War?

Of course, the underlying question is whether the women who have come into the engineering factories are to remain there after the war. In some areas, notably Birmingham, they have been employed in light engineering factories for a long time past (even before the last war), and the present war has only increased their numbers very greatly. In other areas, women's employment was in many cases exceptional before 1940, but has of course increased greatly now. It seems practically certain that women will be employed in large numbers in the light engineering and metal trades throughout the country—and not merely in a few centres—after the war, but that they will fail to hold their own in the heavier branches. If that is so, it clearly follows that they ought to be organised in the same Unions as the men; but whether this should mean the A.E.U. and the smaller Unions based on the skilled crafts or the two big general Unions depends on what happens about the organisation of the less skilled male workers. In this field the two Unions of "General" Workers are too strongly entrenched to be driven out without a tremendous struggle, which the A.E.U. is hardly likely to face, at any rate, under war conditions. It would be a different matter if there were any serious move towards a comprehensive reorganisation of the Trade Union movement on the lines proposed by the N.U.R. at this week's Congress. But no such move seems probable; and accordingly what is likely to happen is a division of the women as well as the less skilled men between the two groups, with the unfortunate effect that it will be a difficult matter to get an agreed policy in facing the problems of factory reorganisation after the war.

The N.U.R. and the Service Men

The National Union of Railwaymen having, contrary to expectations, rejected the railway companies' amended wage-offer of 4s. advance for men and 3s. for women, the case will now go to arbitration, via the regular negotiating machinery. It will be an important test case; for if the N.U.R. were to get anything near the 10s. to which it is laying claim, there would certainly be a round of applications from workers in other industries and services, and the effect would be to aggravate the existing disparity between the economic position of men in the armed forces and their dependents and workers in civil life. It is, no doubt, a great mistake to suppose that high wages are the rule, even in the war industries; and a good many of the extravagantly high earnings that used to be widely reported have been cut out by the discontinuance of much unprofitable overtime and Sunday work. Nevertheless, the all-in average for men over 21 in the industries covered by the Ministry of Labour returns was over £5 in January of this year—a rise of nearly 50 per cent. over the earnings of 1938. £5 is none too high a wage in these days for a man with a number of dependents; but there have been substantial rises in wage-rates since January—from 22 to about 30 per cent. above pre-war level. These increases in *rates* may not mean a parallel rise in earnings; but the upward tendency, coinciding with nearly stable prices for the majority of essential goods (though not for all) and with a growing shortage of supplies, plainly indicates a difficult situation. If it is necessary, as we feel sure it is in view of the advent of the American army as well as for reasons of justice, to add considerably to the incomes of the armed forces and their dependents, there cannot be much to spare for wage advances. This situation greatly strengthens the case for immediate extension of the national minimum principle recently applied to the miners, and earlier to the agricultural labourers. It also points the way to an attempt to distribute what is available more fairly by means of family allowances for wage-earners as well as for soldiers, sailors and airmen. We are in fact approaching the point at which it will become impossible to avoid inflation without a comprehensive wage policy.

Accident Proneness

It is well known that the number of industrial accidents has seriously increased as a result of war conditions. The Industrial Health Research Board attempts in its latest report to sum up what has been learnt, as a result of recent studies, about the causation and preventability of accidents. This report, on *The Personal Factor in Accidents* (Stationery Office, 4d.), makes it clear that there are wide differences among individuals with the same experience and exposed to the same risks in proneness to accidents, and that in the case of skilled occupations (but not apparently of unskilled) this proneness is closely related to speed of reaction and of the correlation of hand and eye. This is in accordance with what would be expected; but it is useful to have it statistically confirmed. The moral, of course, is that in selecting workers for dangerous skilled processes, what are called "aesthetokinetic" tests can be of great importance. The Report does not disguise the fact that study of the causation of industrial accidents is still in its infancy. In particular, almost nothing is known about accident-proneness among workers on repetition jobs, except that it does *not* appear, as among the skilled workers, to depend much on quickness of reaction. In view of the vast amount of repetition work involved in war production, here is a field that ought to be promptly and systematically explored.

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GROUND-PLAN FOR BUILDING

The Uthwatt Report is a document of fundamental importance. Unlike its companion, the Scott Report, on which we commented a few weeks ago, it is an entirely practical plan for the provision of a basis on which real preparations for post-war reconstruction can be made. The product of an "expert committee," so described in its title, it is hard reading; and all its implications cannot be grasped at once. But its essential features are readily understandable. In brief, it makes five fundamental propositions: (1) that the "development rights" in all "undeveloped" land pass immediately into the possession of the State, and that no development in such land be allowed henceforth without the authorisation of a National Planning Authority; (2) that the power of public bodies to acquire land already developed be greatly simplified and extended, and be no longer confined to land which is definitely required for public use; (3) that a quinquennial valuation be made of the site value of all land, except agricultural land, and that 75 per cent. of increments in site values be taken by the State; (4) that compensation be based on estimated values where land is publicly acquired, but that there be, for the present, a "ceiling" to compensation, which shall not exceed pre-war value; (5) that compensation for the public acquisition of "development rights" take the form of a global sum, which will then be divided among the claimants by a tribunal—as in the case of coal acquired by the State under the post-war Coal Act.

This is the barest summary of what is proposed. It will be seen that the Uthwatt Committee does not propose any general nationalisation of either urban or rural land. Indeed, it explicitly rules out nationalisation on the ground that it is not immediately practicable, though it recognises it as the logical outcome of its survey of what is required in order to give a firm foundation for the unified treatment of land in the public interest. The curious phrasing of Paragraph 47, in which this question is discussed, strongly suggests either disagreement on the Committee or a strong hint from "higher up" that the nationalisation solution had better be excluded. It is not, says the Committee, "a policy to be embarked on lightly, and it would arouse keen political controversy . . . Delay, to say the least, would result . . . It would involve financial operations which in the immediate post-war period might, as we see the matter, be entirely out of the question." We read this enigmatic paragraph as meaning that the Committee was well aware that the Government would not nationalise the land, and therefore, having a desire to get something done at once, ruled out proposing it.

The question that then arises is whether the unified treatment of all land in accordance with the overriding national interest—which the Committee emphatically declares to be necessary—can be secured without public ownership. The Committee thinks it can—provided, but only provided, the State creates at once and arms with very extensive powers a National Planning Authority. This authority, it is stated in the Report, must be something essentially different from the existing Ministry of Works and Planning. It must be a separate Ministry, with a skilled and powerful Commission attached to it, fully empowered, not merely to co-ordinate local or regional plans or to exercise negative control, but to make a constructive national plan for the entire country, covering all types of development, the use of all types of land, and the scaling-down of existing towns and cities as well as the building of new ones and the dispersal and relocation of industries so as to achieve a better balance. Unless these conditions are thoroughly satisfied, the Uthwatt Committee's plan, on the Committee's own statement, will not work.

Realising this, the Committee assumes throughout that a National Planning Authority armed with these vast powers is to be created, and, in its own words, "that national planning is intended to be a reality and a permanent feature of the administration of the internal affairs of this country." This, then, is the issue which has to be squarely faced. There is no sense in considering the adequacy of the Uthwatt proposals on any other basis than the complete acceptance by the Government of the National Planning Authority and of the power postulated for it.

On this assumption, the complete acquisition by the State of "development rights" in all undeveloped land does seem to provide a tolerable basis for post-war planning, *as far as such land is concerned*. Whether it also provides a tolerable basis for post-war agriculture and forestry (which are not counted as "development") is another matter; and we hold strongly that it does not. This question, however, was outside the Uthwatt Committee's terms of reference.

Even if acquisition of "development rights" in "undeveloped" land does provide a workable basis for planning on such land, what about the position on land which is already developed? The Committee clearly contemplates extensive public purchase of blitzed areas and of other urban areas needing redevelopment; but it lays down no rule about this, beyond a simplification of the procedure of acquisition. The question, of course, is, "Who is to pay for such land?"; and this question the Committee admits its inability to answer, as it can be answered only by the Government as part of the general answer to the question "Who is to pay for reconstruction?" Accordingly, this vital issue is left in suspense; and that it is so left inevitably robs the Report of much of its value. Surely the most essential thing of all, to provide a basis for planned reconstruction, is public acquisition of all urban land on which redevelopment is to be carried out. The Committee rightly rejects as inadequate proposals to establish private "pools" of landowners to own such land in common. Surely, if these "pools" are inadequate, the only solution lies not in piecemeal acquisition, but in a general transfer of urban land to public ownership. The mere control over redevelopment proposed by the Committee will not work, as long as the implied obligation remains in the State not to affect injuriously the value of particular patches of land. Simplified public acquisition would work, if its exercise were in fact practically universal in areas due for redevelopment. But will it be, even if the National Planning Authority gets all the powers demanded for it?

Finally, the plan to base compensation for the acquisition of "development rights" as a global sum, to be divided among the claimants, is plainly right; for, as the Committee proves up to the hilt, any other method is bound to result in grossly excessive payments. There is a hundred times as much theoretically "developable" land as can be actually developed; and separate assessment involves compensating all the owners of the land on the assumption that their bit of it will be actually developed. This is absurd; and the "global compensation" plan is the only reasonable solution. It should be applied, in our view, in the acquisition of urban land as well.

This cursory survey has inevitably left out much that is important. The thing that matters is whether the Government does or does not accept the Uthwatt Committees fundamental premise, and is or is not prepared to set up a National Planning Authority under its own Minister, and with real power. On that issue, the Government has pledged itself, in general terms, on more than one occasion; but nothing has been done, the recent excuse being that it has to wait for the publication of the Uthwatt Report. The Report is now out; and we await the Government's word. Is there to be, now at length, a basis on which reconstruction plans can proceed, or is there not? The issue behind this question is whether the people are to live in comfortable houses, in towns built for the benefit of the nation, beautifully set in a countryside still beautiful, or whether use and amenity alike are to be sacrificed to the profits of landlords and building societies?

CONGRESS AND THE WAR

[Mr. Paul Ward, formerly well-known as London Correspondent of the *Baltimore Sun*, sends us this article from Washington.]

What Americans do as voters in the next few months may have far-reaching effects on the world's future. They are scheduled to go to the polls on November 3 to fill all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and a third of the Senate's 96 seats.

It was in just such a Congressional election in 1918—six days before the Armistice—that Americans threw away their chances of winning the peace of the following year. They took away President Wilson's control of Congress and installed opposition majorities in both Houses. The margin of the opposition, or Republican, victory over the Democrats was slim, but it foretold the coming accession to power of the Republicans and the establishment of their reign, under Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover, that was to last from 1920 until Roosevelt's election in 1932. More especially, the returns foreshadowed America's imminent return to isolationism. Washington a year later rejected the Versailles treaty and turned its back on the League.

It is in the light of the history of 1918 that both the Axis and anti-Axis world will be watching for the returns of November, 1942. Statistically, at least, they are certain to be far different. That much is assured by the current distribution of Congressional seats and the results of the primary elections held to date. The Republicans had to gain but few seats in the House and Senate to win control of each in 1918, whereas this year they would have to overcome overwhelming Democratic majorities in both Houses. And this is a physically impossible achievement for them in the Senate, to which each of the forty-eight States sends two Senators. Only a third of its ninety-six seats are at issue in each biennial election, and most of the thirty-two Senate seats involved in the coming elections are held by Democrats from the Solid South or similarly "safe" constituencies. If the Republicans captured all the seats where they have even the slightest chance of victory, they still would lack a Senate majority.

The outlook in the House of Representatives is less certain. In that chamber, whose membership is apportioned by population rather than States, all seats fall vacant biennially and the dependably Democratic States have proportionately fewer of them than they do in the Senate. Currently, the Democrats hold outright 263 House seats and, particularly on matters of "New Deal" legislation in the domestic field, are supported by three Progressive and one Farmer-Laborite members. The Republicans, with only 164 seats, would have to gain an additional 54 to achieve control of the chamber, which includes election of the Speaker and control of all the standing committees of the House.

Current "opinion" polls indicate the Republicans will fall far short of winning a majority of the House seats in November. They do more than that. They indicate the Republicans actually will lose some of the seats they now have and that the Democrats, constituting Mr. Roosevelt's party, may add some fifteen seats to their current strength. It is of particular interest in its bearing upon America's position in the war that the polls indicate the Democratic gains will be in such States as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois which, prior to Pearl Harbour, provided the backbone of isolationist sentiment. The Democratic gains forecast in those States are expected more than to offset prospective Republican gains in the East.

These unofficial samplings of public opinion have proven in the past reasonably accurate foretellers of election results. They suffer, however, from one major deficiency. They cannot weigh the effect of unforeseen events occurring between the sampling and the actual balloting. Another major setback for the United Nations, such as a complete Russian collapse, might turn the electorate in fury upon the Roosevelt Administration. A less disastrous military turn of events might

have a similar result, particularly if it were bad enough to unseat the Churchill Government in Britain. More likely to shape any changes in electoral sentiment in the next two months are such restrictions on what Mr. Willkie calls "the American way of life" as petrol and tyre rationing, meat shortages, mounting living costs and taxes, and the continued shutting down of small businesses that have been unable to cut out for themselves a place in the war production programme, largely monopolised by the big corporations.

These domestic derangements are certainly affecting public opinion, for they are throwing the national economy seriously out of gear without, as yet, producing rewarding results in terms of aeroplane, tank, ship, and gun production. Moreover, they are all to a large extent the result of governmental mismanagement and faulty planning. This is particularly true in the case of petrol and meat, the country producing exportable surpluses of both. It is equally but less apparently true in the case of rubber, steel and other shortages that are hurting war production. It also is true of the distribution of war contracts. But there are ample indications that the electorate does not as yet blame Mr. Roosevelt for these governmental shortcomings and that there has been no substantial ebbing of his personal popularity.

That there is not an appreciable groundswell of dissatisfaction is shown more impressively by the primary elections thus far held than by the "opinion" polls. The primaries are preliminary to the general election in November. They are strictly party elections. In the primaries various candidates for the Democratic, or Republican, nomination in November make their races. The voter, entering the polling place, must declare his party affiliation. He receives, then, only the ballot of his party, listing the various contestants for the honour of bearing that party's standard in the final election in November. These primary elections are scattered over the year. Some are held early in the spring. The last will be held in mid-September. The great majority already have been held. Their chief result has been to show, instead of a groundswell in electoral sentiment, a great apathy. The voting everywhere has been light—in many cases a bare ten per cent. of the eligible voters participating—and in the great majority of cases incumbents have won renomination easily. The Republican votes have tended to outnumber Democratic, but the Republicans, being the "outs," naturally show more partisan zeal at the primaries than do the Democrats, who are the contented "ins." What is dangerous for the latter in this situation is that Republican zeal may capture for that party of "big business" and conservatism many local and State governments whose machines will serve them well in the 1944 Presidential and Congressional elections. The Republicans may also be strengthened this year by the migration of thousands of working class families—mainstay of the New Deal—from their old voting places to new locales where munitions factories have lured them with consequent loss of their voting rights until they have established a year's residence in their new homes. The Republicans expect, too, to benefit by the taking into the armed forces of millions of men who, being young, were predominantly inclined to support Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal rather than Republican conservatism. Legislation, however, is pending in Congress to assure these absentees in uniform the right to vote in November.

Another thing the primary elections have shown is that isolationism is a dead issue. A few pre-Pearl Harbour isolationists have been denied renomination by the voters. A larger number of pre-Pearl Harbour interventionists have gone down to defeat. The outcome in each contest has hinged more upon local issues than upon the candidate's stand on the war before the Japanese attacked United States outposts in the Pacific.

The majority of American voters do not care what stand a Congressmen took on the war nine months ago so long as he pledges unswerving devotion to the cause of victory now. And all candidates do so pledge themselves. There is not a single candidate for Congress espousing a return to isolationism. There is not a single party with sufficient power to elect so much as a local alderman that is advocating even a negotiated peace. The candidates, one and all, vie in pledging the electorate a more vigorous prosecution of the war in line with Mr. Roosevelt's avowed policies.

Thus, it may be taken for granted that Mr. Roosevelt will escape in November the fate visited upon Wilson twenty-four years earlier. But to Britons, unfamiliar with the pitfalls of American politics, a word of warning is due. The statistics of the election returns may appear to be more promising of American perseverance in the international policies of Mr. Roosevelt than may actually be the case. The possession of Democratic majorities in both House and Senate for another two years would by no means be a guarantee of continued support for Mr. Roosevelt in those policies. There is in the United States no such party discipline as in Britain. Members of Congress, regardless of party, are free to vote as they please on each issue that comes before them. They are responsible not to the national party organisation but to their constituents. And it is a tradition of American politics that Democrats in power can be trusted to fall to quarreling among themselves. It is even true that at present and for some years past the strongest opposition Mr. Roosevelt has encountered in Congress has always been provided by members of his own party joining forces with the Republicans. The Congress to be elected in November promises to be in personnel as well as prejudices very much like the present one. It is pre-eminently a middle-class gathering, unimaginative, conservative to the point of being reactionary, dominated by local and regional rather than national and international concerns, and carried along on a reasonably liberal and collaborationist course only by the force of Mr. Roosevelt's personality.

PAUL W. WARD

THE BELFAST EXECUTION

[This article by a well-known Dublin journalist gives a picture of the feeling in Ireland at the time of the Belfast execution.]

WHATEVER the legal case for the execution of the nineteen-year-old youth Williams for his part in the killing of a Belfast policeman, there is no doubt that the execution was a political blunder. And as the case for his execution appears to have been mainly political this is a grave indictment.

Every observer of events in the Northern Ireland area knows that the Nationalists have lived for years under conditions of repression. Police cars swoop down and arrest young men who are interned without trial. All this has been intensified since war came. Even in peacetime "B. Specials" patrolling the roads fired shots at citizens who did not answer promptly enough. Orange dynamiters have blown up a stone memorial erected by the Nationalists no less than three times. On the last occasion it was blown up in the stone yard, near the police station, before it could be re-erected on the old spot.

Just as in London the political demonstrator of the Left grasps his banner and sets out for Trafalgar Square, so in Belfast the enthusiast on either side fires shots to demonstrate the warmth of his convictions. It is an old Belfast custom. The Northern authorities, as usual, banned the commemoration of the Easter Rising, which is observed with honour in the rest of the country. The militant Nationalists in the North took this as an annual challenge. So this year, as before, they set out to demonstrate. The demonstration took the form of shooting at a police car which was cruising round for the purpose of dispersing any Nationalists gathering in defiance of the ban.

Having fired their shots the young men dashed away and—if they had not been followed by the police—the incident would have ended. This was their demonstration and honour was satisfied. But they were not quick enough. Penned in a small house and attacked by armed police they used their fire-arms. Williams, the leader of the party, was wounded, a policeman was killed, and the six youths, together with two girls, were arrested.

When the case came before the court the main facts were not in dispute. The State, however, adopted the extraordinary plan of challenging all Catholic jurors and also nine women (suspected of merciful tendencies) who had to stand by. So the case was put on a political partisan footing at the start.

Every one of the prisoners affirmed that there was no premeditation in the shooting. But the judge directed the jury that while in the case of a civilian the evidence might point to manslaughter, in the case of a policeman—who was under special protection of the court—the proper verdict was murder. This verdict was duly recorded. Incidentally it may be mentioned that the two girls were released—a strange proceeding if it was really believed that they were involved in a murder plot.

Not since the days of the struggle for National independence has there been so much feeling roused in Eire as was evinced in this case. I was present at a huge meeting in O'Connell Street, Dublin, where the veteran Labour leader, Jim Larkin, spoke for the reprieve, and a barrister, Mr. Sean MacBride, Secretary of the Reprieve Committee, denounced the challenging of Catholic and women jurors in the North. Public bodies everywhere carried resolutions of protest.

The feeling among Nationalists in the North was even more intense and petitions were signed by thousands. The reprieve of five of the prisoners did not satisfy this nation-wide protest, especially as it was claimed that Williams was lying wounded before the policeman was killed. Yet the matter was decided on the basis of a life for a life and as Williams was the leader, his life was forfeit. Orange opinion had to be placated and in the North an Orangeman remarked that "there will be hell to pay if the men escape execution."

In this atmosphere of political partisanship the sentence on Williams was carried out. The total effect on Irish public opinion is deplorable. Although Eire is strictly neutral in the war, it has been evident during the past months that the steady flow of public opinion has been to Britain and the United Nations. Irish national opinion was shocked by the wholesale shooting of hostages in France, in Belgium, in Holland, and in other nations overrun by the Nazis. Even those influenced by anti-British feeling could not defend such conduct. This execution in the North has been a godsend to those who were silenced by the Nazi acts of repression. Now they point to the Belfast execution as evidence that British standards of justice and humanity are no different from those of the Nazis. In Britain such a view appears fantastic. But try arguing it in Dublin where the execution is everywhere regarded as an injustice.

The life of Williams cannot be restored. But four others have been sentenced to penal servitude for life and one to fifteen years. Surely the dominant element in the North should be satisfied with a life for a life. Further clemency in the case of the other five prisoners in what is admitted to have been an unpremeditated act would help to undo the harm which the execution has already done in Ireland.

The trend of opinion in Ireland is revealed to some extent by the local elections which have just been held. Throughout the country Labour has make a striking advance. It has trebled its representation in the county councils, doubled this on the corporations and has gained a fifty per cent. advance on local councils. This advance has been made at the expense of both the De Valera and Cosgrave parties. More extreme Republican candidates were in the field in Dublin but they did very badly. Evidently electors are inclined to concentrate more upon social issues than national enmities. That is one reason why

the Belfast execution, which relights the old fires, is so deplorable.

In Eire to-day there are many urgent social questions which demand attention, particularly those relating to the economic condition of the people. Under Emergency Order 83—designed to effect wages stabilisation—it became an offence to increase wages. Yet the cost of living has been rising rapidiy. A modification of this Order has been made, but the principle is still retained. The economic argument is that if wages are kept low, price inflation will not occur. But Mr. Hugo Flinn, the turf controller, has pointed out that thousands of pounds are flowing into Eire every week from Irish munition workers in Britain, and this money competes on the Irish market for the ever-diminishing stocks of goods. Questions of wages and prices are occupying the minds of Irish workers. Even more than this, the shortage of raw materials for Irish industries, resulting in short time, in rotational work, and a general slowing down of production, gives rise to increasing economic anxiety.

Irish Labour, too, is now subject to a Trade Union Act (1941) containing new and dangerous principles of State registration before a union is allowed to act as a "negotiating body" to settle wages and conditions with employers. Unions are compelled to make substantial deposits, as security, based on membership, before they can become registered bodies and function as trade unions at all. This Act was supposed to check the activities of "mushroom" unions responsible for unnecessary disputes. But the wartime situation, with the general depression of industries, has weakened labour industrially so that few strikes are possible to-day. Organised Labour declared against this Act, but has not been able to prevent its enactment. Increasingly its effect is being felt by unions with headquarters in Britain, who will have to put down deposits of £1,000—as a minimum—if they wish to function in Ireland. Twenty British unions—including the N.U.R. and the A.E.U—have already registered under the Act.

Politically—with the blanket of neutrality spread over the land—there is a condition of stagnation. No big issues divide the majority parties. Mr. Cosgrave asserted some time ago that Mr. De Valera had stolen his programme. De Valera admitted they were both one, but he added—in a burst of rare humour—"I am the one!" The country trusts De Valera to keep it out of the war and the most common comment of the man in the street is that "Dev. must be a clever man to have kept us out so long."

Irish Labour has not such a clear-cut programme as the Labour movement in Britain. But its outlook is broadly democratic. Social issues are coming more and more to the front at the expense of purely national issues. Such happenings as the Belfast execution tend to reverse this and to throw the country into the cauldron of bubbling enmities once more. R. M. Fox

A LONDON DIARY

I THOUGHT Sir Stafford Cripps rather hard on the House of Commons on Tuesday. His complaint, delivered as by a Headmaster to the assembled school, was apparently on two heads. First that M.P.s went out to their lunch instead of listening to Arthur Greenwood; some even went out before the Prime Minister had finished speaking. Secondly, M.P.s were considered naughty because they had so little to say that the House rose without any serious debate. This is a new complaint. I have often heard M.P.s accused of irresponsibility because they talked too much or too soon; taciturnity is a new House of Commons vice. Two comments seem to follow. First that the Prime Minister's speech was uncontroversial, important and almost boring. (This last adjective has been used to me by several M.P.s; and it is such a novel characteristic for the Premier that I suspect him of being purposely unexciting.) Secondly, I think the House showed a great sense of responsibility in not blowing off steam at the end of a statement which was full of meat and which wanted careful reading. I hear that some M.P.s reacted very vigorously against Sir Stafford's lecture. They did not talk because they wanted time to think before speaking.

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Three Swedish food ships have arrived in Greece. Just what this means we in this country can dimly imagine. Few of us have seen starvation except in the ghastly photographs of famine in Europe and Russia after the last war. The figures of deaths from starvation and its accompanying diseases now coming from Greece are staggering. I am told that there are 2,500 deaths every day in Athens and the Piraeus. This may be an exaggerated estimate, and I am reminded that it is only the towns that will be actually starving. But no one denies that apart from special relief Athens would quite literally be a city of the dead by next summer. Relief is difficult. Switzerland can no longer supply milk; the Turkish relief scheme stopped. The Swedish ships, however, have arrived. The case for sending them and increasing the relief greatly is overwhelming. Greece is in a special category. It is completely dependent on shipping for food and Britain has taken Greece's ships and is using them for general war purposes. The amount of food needed for Greece is not enough to tempt the Nazis, who can get the grain they need by much easier routes. No one in fact suggests that the food taken in under the auspices of the International Red Cross is seized by the Nazis. All this the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Government admit; the principle of food for Greece is accepted. It does not affect the war—except perhaps in keeping alive some very gallant Allies of ours whose misfortunes are, in part, our failure. The case for increasing the supply of food for Greece seems unanswerable.

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The Committee of Inquiry into the three Women's Services was well composed, the women members—among them Miss Violet Markham, Mrs. Walter Elliot, Mrs. Stocks and Dr. Summerskill—were certain to talk sense. Their report is a human document, sympathetic and practical. They use the language of ordinary life. They say, for instance, that the morality of the Women's Services is a "prickly" subject, but that the standard of women in uniform is, in fact, rather higher than that of women in civilian life. Anyway there are proportionately fewer illegitimate pregnancies. But then, they say, "Virtue has no gossip value" and its opposite is more noticeable in a camp than in a street, and causes more gossip. There are a large number of recommendations, mostly aimed at improving the quality and number of the officers in the A.T.S. and W.A.A.F., and to securing a uniformly good standard of comfort, cooking, accommodation, and working hours. The W.R.N.S., the smallest of the services, seems to be perhaps for that reason the best organised. They are critical about the loss of opportunity in education. It is not enough, they urge, to argue that A.B.C.A. and educational officers provide excellent facilities and that the girls simply show no interest in "education." They suggest more and better use of C.E.M.A. to stimulate interest in art and music; more books; better lectures. Lectures, of course, vary. Some of those offered are excellent; but in some places orthodoxy is regarded as more important than the capacity to interest. But, truth to tell, the quite uneducated, whose interests are not already aroused, do not respond to lecture technique. The "Any Questions" method, however, invariably goes well because the audience shares in the entertainment and does not know that in beginning to be interested it is beginning an education. The Brains Trust succeeds throughout the other Forces; it would succeed in the Women's Services too.

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Army pay and allowances, which the House of Commons discussed this week, is one of the great internal issues of this country. Soldiers just have not got that half-crown in their pockets that means self-respect in the pub., and we cannot afford to add to the Army's lack of confidence in itself. From the rather bleak tone of the White Paper issued last month, it may be deduced that the Government are reluctant to make any further concessions. But I doubt if the House will long stand for that. The White Paper discloses that, by comparison with the lowest commissioned and non-commissioned ranks, N.C.O.s are relatively well off. The minimum Service rate of pay is 17*s.* 6*d.* per week, and it can hardly be disputed that, even after generous allowance is made for the value of all benefits in kind, this is too low. The White Paper admits that the net income of an unmarried private soldier cannot be valued at more than 52*s.* 6*d.* per week. And the method by which this sum is calculated (an estimate of the minimum sum he would otherwise have to spend on the items of living with which he is provided) is certainly open to criticism. The case of commissioned officers in the lowest rank is probably even harder. They get £201 a year, plus cash allowances of approximately £147. This leaves them with a net income of only £322. Allowances granted to married officers are on a less niggardly scale, and do something to mitigate the position. The fact remains that, with the existing scale of expenses, it is practically impossible for a newly commissioned unmarried officer to live on his pay. This is not only wrong in principle, but cannot fail to have a serious effect on "morale." I know of many cases of senior N.C.O.s in all three Services who have refused a commission on the perfectly legitimate ground that they cannot afford it. If Parliament insists on an increase in the basic rates of pay of the lower commissioned and non-commissioned ranks, it will have the backing of the country, and will have performed a notable public service.

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From Scotland I hear that at least one domestic problem has been solved in the Parliamentary recess. This was the problem of oats. Why the Ministry of Food allowed several thousand tons of the 1941 crop to go bad on the farms of the north-east of Scotland, and ultimately refused to purchase them, is an unexplained mystery. The most probable explanation is lack of adequate storage accommodation (for which there is no excuse), coupled with the fact that some part of the crop was harvested in bad condition, owing to wet weather. But in the circumstances which prevailed last July, it was adding insult to injury to ask the Scottish farmers to plough up more land. The matter was raised in the debate on food production just before the recess by Mr. Boothby, who produced a handful of "unsweet" oats from his constituency, and remarked with ample justification that every henwife in the country would go down on her knees for them. In the end the Ministry capitulated. The balance of the 1941 crop has now been purchased at prices satisfactory to the farmers, and arrangements have been made to purchase the whole of this year's available surplus. It is yet another proof that, of all Government Departments, the Ministry of Food is the most flexible, and the most ready to acknowledge mistakes.

With the present shortage of feeding-stuffs, there should never be any difficulty in disposing of oats, even if they are not in good enough condition for milling. The simple expedient of releasing a limited quantity "off-ration" would cause any temporary glut to vanish in twenty-four hours. I understand that a propaganda campaign designed to increase human consumption in the form of porridge and oatcakes is to be undertaken, and that the question of including a proportion of oatmeal flour in the national loaf is now under serious consideration.

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The *Daily Worker*, which duly appeared on Monday, is now produced at the offices of the Caledonian Press, which, I understand, the Communist Party has recently succeeded in purchasing. This means that *London Labour News*, amongst other papers, now comes from the same press as the *Daily Worker*. Indeed,

I suppose that the Communists are now in a position to ban Herbert Morrison's paper if they wish. Caledonian Press used to belong to the Iron and Steelworkers, whose President, Jimmy Walker, is about the most ferocious anti-Communist in the country. Altogether a very surprising little business transaction in the middle of a political fight which can only end in the death or absorption of one or other party. At present the score is distinctly one up to the Communists. Blitzed out of their old building, they now have the Caledonian Press, which gives them housing room; they are very much overcrowded, but the paper comes out and is printed by their own press. The only criticism I have heard of the first issues this week was that they were rather dull. Certainly they were models of propriety. Nothing surprising in that. With Russia fighting a desperate battle, nobody in the country feels a graver sense of responsibility than the Communists. In comparison with the *Daily Worker* to-day, the *Times* is a lighthearted and flippant organ.

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Some of us have long been asking for a Pacific Charter—that is for a statement of the war aims of the United Nations in Asia. A pronouncement repudiating the privileges of white superiority would have been of immense value not only in India, but also in China, Burma and throughout South East Asia. No such pronouncement has been made. I am not surprised now to learn that the Japanese, as part of their New Order in Asia, have called an international conference in Tokio to discuss a Japanese Pacific Charter. Japan declares the coloured war against the West—in the long run as much against Germany as against Britain and America.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to R. H. Hill.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

A glance at the *Times* shows that a lot of children are born every day.—British Industrial Plastics Ltd. Advert. in *Punch*.

Hanley Bethel Temple, Hope Street.
Peggy Ames of Western Canada
(Converted Stage and Screen Actress)
Continues her Special Visit
over week-end.
Subjects include:
From Deathbed to Pulpit
Is Spiritualism from Heaven or Hell?
Why I Left the Stage!
High Spots in the Life of an ex-Actress.
Second Coming of the Lord.
A HEARTY WELCOME TO ALL.
Advert in *Evening Sentinel*, Stoke-on-Trent.

This country can count many blessings to-day—blessings less apparent, perhaps, than the reverses and frustrations and anxieties which we must suffer. And no piece of good fortune has been finer than the character and composition of the T.U.C.—*Sunday Express*.

"*Everything went tickety-boo. Yes, quite tickety-boo.*"

Now in the Navy, if a job is done well, it is "all tickety-boo." It's a phrase Mountbatten has handed down to the Service in the way that Nelson gave them "Every man expects . . ."—*Sunday Pictorial*.

The ordinary Englishman is a home-loving individual: he would much prefer the Germans to come over and fight us here, as they nearly did in 1940, than to seek them in some foreign country. (Hence the popularity of the Home Guards.)—*Evening Standard*.

"All European countries dread the Bolshevists, but they feel that, if Britain controls Russia, then they are going to be all right!"—Countess of Listowel, quoted in the *Lincolnshire Standard*.

THE UNITED HEAD HUNTERS

Naga tribesmen, head-hunters of Assam, at war with Japan, have toasted the Allies as "Ishu" (friends). The King of Namdang and Bong of Wong declared for the United Nations early this year.—News items.

Nagas are henceforth our Allies
In the cause of all peace-loving nations.
They do not need lend-lease supplies
To prevent Japanese infiltrations
In the Burma-Assam operations.

Brass hats of the head-hunting tribe
Give tactics their closest attention,
And, if they refuse to subscribe
To the terms of the Fourth Hague Convention,
It's a purely religious abstention.

The headmen collect heads of Japs,
Hoards of which are their national treasure;
Home production of spare parts for traps
Employs all non-combatants' leisure,
Total war to these tribes is a pleasure.

The nations who earn their goodwill
They hail as blood-brothers or "Ishu";
Race hatred is part of their drill,
All are clear on the ethical issue—
That the Japs are decidedly "nishu."

The home-guards of Namdang and Wong
Protect our abandoned position,
And Wavell's invited chief Bong
To train troops in the tribal tradition.
He is sending New Delhi a Mission.

SAGITTARIUS

AGRICULTURE IN WAR AND PEACE. II

IN the previous article the Government's food production policy was outlined. Its application, however, has involved other matters and these must now be discussed. As was observed, compulsion has formed no part of the policy, but the Government has depended upon appeals to the farmer's patriotism and more particularly to his pocket. The extension of arable farming throughout parts of the country which for two generations had been predominantly pastoral, was associated inevitably sometimes with high costs of production and with occasional crop failures. To compensate for these, prices have been fixed to give profits to everybody, with the result that practitioners in the old-established arable areas are being extravagantly rewarded. The prices fixed for the potato crop, for example, provide handsome profits for most of the growers. To protect the minority, however inexperienced in the cultivation of this crop or handicapped by inferior land, a bonus of £10 an acre is paid to *all* growers.

Another criticism of the price policy is the failure to secure any price parity, with the result that some crops, and not necessarily those the country most needs, are more profitable than alternative ones. Barley, for instance, has been left virtually uncontrolled until this year, and even at the controlled price the crop is about twice as profitable to the grower as any other cereal, while it is useful only for brewing and stock-feeding. It would seem elementary either that all prices should have been controlled on a parity basis, or that cropping should have been controlled to ensure the production of what the country most needed rather than what market prices suggested would be most profitable. Farmers are business men, and like other business men they will trade to their own advantage.

The outbreak of the war found much of the English countryside shabby and somewhat dilapidated. The Minister has told us of worn-out pastures, of water-logged land and of land gone derelict. In the enthusiasm for increased production, the sombre colour has been laid too thickly on the picture, no doubt, but to the extent that it is a fair representation of the rural scene, it can only be regarded as a reflection upon landlords and tenants, who have failed, it is thereby suggested, in their duty to the land. The Minister's task, however, was not to apportion responsibility but to remove these handicaps on maximum production, and he is doing it by a system of grants-in-aid up to 50 per cent. of the cost of work undertaken, paid by the Exchequer, to enable private individuals to put their estates and farms in better order. It is only fair to add that in cases of extreme inefficiency in farm management, the County Committees are empowered to take possession and farm the land or re-let it. No similar powers are conferred upon them, however, to enable them to deal with inefficient estate management.

Less questionable than this scheme to prop up bad farming and estate management, at the cost of the public, is the universal organisation, through the County War Agricultural Committees, of labour services for farmers, on contract. The great extension of the ploughlands found many farmers ill-equipped with tillage implements and machinery and not a few without the skill to use them. Fleets of tractors and their equipment of ploughs, harrows, etc., binders and threshing machinery, have been provided in every county, together with the labour staffs necessary to operate them, and farmers can hire their services.

A credit system for farmers and landowners has been in operation since the early days of the war. Farmers can borrow for any approved purpose from the Exchequer, and these cover nearly everything, materials and services, which they are likely to want. At the prices current for farm products the risks of non-recovery by the State in due course are negligible. Landowners and farmers, too, can borrow the balances of the costs of the land improvement schemes referred to above as qualifying for Government grants-in-aid.

Here, then, is the position of agriculture in this country to-day. A great conversion of grassland to tillage has been effected. In these new ploughlands we have great potential reserves for human food production still awaiting exploitation. The pig and poultry populations have declined, and also sheep, but beef and dairy cattle have been maintained at their pre-war numbers. Agricultural wages have been raised to put them more on a parity with industrial wages and to justify the compulsory retention of land workers in agricultural employment. The Government has entered the field as a labour contractor to carry out mechanical work on contract for farmers, and to undertake considerable works of land drainage and reclamation for landowners. The price schedule and its associated bonuses are fixed at levels which are high enough to keep the marginal producer in being. A State-organised agricultural credit scheme is in operation and a scheme to secure the rehabilitation of private property in land by means of Government grants-in-aid. The most inefficient farmers, who are said to number some 20 per cent., have been put under supervision and in the last resort are being evicted. Administration of the wartime effort is delegated to local committees selected and appointed by the Minister of Agriculture.

A consideration both of these emergency measures and of the administration of them makes it clear that when the war is over much may have been done which will be of service to the country. Farmers, if they are wise, will retain much of their land in arable cultivation which formerly was under grass, for only in this way can they main-

tain their turnover, and the rapid development of mechanical cultivation is doing much to reduce the costs of arable farming on the larger holding. The exercise of powers to control the bad farmer and even to dispossess him is good and it should continue. It has long been a grievance of the landlord that it was virtually impossible, as the land was administered, to get rid of a bad tenant, though it may be noted, in passing, that the tenant was—and still is—in the same difficulty when he was saddled with a bad landlord.

The farmers' credit scheme marks another advance, for it recognises the fact that modern banking practice, with its preference for a quick turnover, is ill-adapted to the conditions governing production from the land, which often call for the lengthy investment of capital and bring slow returns. The present scheme or some modification of it, given closer scrutiny of applicants and of their applications than may be thought necessary in wartime, might be worked into the farm finance of the future to the great advantage of the industry.

On the social side, the recognition of the rural workers' right to a comparable standard of living was necessary, and unless the land is to be denuded of labour, it must continue.

These seem to be the positive gains from the Government's wartime land policy—gains which should be made permanent in any reconstruction policy. It is when we consider the finance of farming to-day that we realise where drastic changes will be called for in framing the national long-term policy. The reconditioning of farms and estates and the reclamation of fens and wastes which is being financed out of the public purse may be justified, with some hesitation, during the present crisis. But when the war is over, there can be no justification for improving private property at public expense. If it should prove that production from the land is being prejudiced by the inability of landowners to shoulder their tasks, a much bigger issue is raised and it cannot be resolved by putting them on the dole.

The same is true of guaranteed prices and the payment of subsidies to farmers. There are grounds for believing that the scale of farm prices as now fixed has outrun the rise in costs to an extent which will be something of a revelation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he begins to get the farmers' first income-tax returns. But even though it be thought necessary, now, to pay excessive prices to efficient producers in order to keep the inefficient running, this is clearly no policy when the present emergency is passed. Protection of agriculture may have to go on by some means or other, but it must be given in a way such as will not rule out all need for economy and efficiency in production. Further, it should be selective. It may be necessary, in time of war, to encourage the production of everything of which our land is capable, though this is arguable. In time of peace, however, there can be no justification of such a policy. Rather, the State should use such protection as the industry may need, so as to direct production along the lines of greatest national advantage.

Lastly, there is the question of administration. This country has long been organised for administration on the representative principle, and "appointed" committees are out of tune. The Minister's County War Agricultural Committees are not representative and they should go. Local executives will certainly be needed after the war, and if the Agricultural Committees of the County Councils as constituted to-day are inadequate, they should be strengthened and reorganised to fulfil the necessary functions.

When all has been done, however, the problem of the future of the land is not going to be solved merely by making farming profitable under safeguards to ensure efficiency and the maintenance of social standards. The pre-war appeal to the State for help and the general assumption that State help will still be needed in the post-war period raise at once the whole question of the capacity of our present land system to meet the needs of modern life, and it has got to be faced and answered.

C. S. ORWIN

WINDOW VIEW

I WAS sitting on the top of a London 'bus the other day when a man and his wife took the opposite seat and placed a small daughter on her feet where she could look out of the window and see what a fine place the world is. There are, I am sure, few more memorable pleasures than that of looking out of a window. The window of a nursery, the window of a tram or 'bus, the window of a train—who was ever bored by the spectacle to be seen from any of them? Snow or heavy rain seen through a window brings the child to the frontier of an enchanted country. Snowflakes fall with a leisurely beauty and thickness never to be seen again till one possesses one of those globes which when shaken produce a miniature snowstorm—would that I had one now!—every drop of rain that takes its irregular course down the glass is followed with the excitement that one feels in later years when reading a detective story. No vehicle that passes but is as interesting as part of a circus—the milkman's cart, the chemist's cart, the baker's cart, the cart from which water used to be sold immune from the germs of typhoid fever—what a procession things of the kind have been ever since windows were invented! The neighbours who passed might seem to an older eye to be ordinary people; but, seen from the inside of the window, each of them, with his handsome port or gouty limp, with her goddess-like profile or raddled cheeks and heavy clothes, had the personality of a character of Dickens. No child bowling a hoop or spinning a top was too insignificant to be a worthy participant in the panorama that could be seen from a window in the top storey of the house—the panorama of life in the narrow circle of one's universe.

As I watched the little girl on the top of the 'bus, I could not help wondering why we who are older have so thoughtlessly abandoned such pleasures. The child was manifestly travelling through a wonderland. Every time we passed a bomb-battered building or a gash in a terrace where a building had once been she cried out with delight: "Mummy, mummy, look! Damage, damage!" And with each ruined building her interest in the world seen through a window appeared to grow. "Look, mummy, look!" she would cry as we passed the skeleton of a Victorian warehouse. "Damage! *Damage!* DAMAGE!" Her voice rose from italics to small capitals, and from small capitals to large, in an ecstasy of spectatorial appreciation. Her vocabulary was small, but never have I heard so few words express more angelic happiness. Nothing would have pleased her better, I am sure, than if Westminster Abbey and Saint Paul's had been razed to the ground and she had been privileged to stand on the top of a 'bus and to catch a glimpse of the ruins through a window.

To an advanced psychologist this might suggest that the little girl had in her the germs of adult sadism. The child, we are sometimes told, is a natural destroyer—a creature that enjoys knocking down the palaces of wooden bricks carefully erected by a more creative junior, tearing pages out of precious books, pulling a clock to pieces, or ruining the happiness of a purring cat by tugging at its tail. I admit that the lust for destruction is probably as widespread as the lust for creation—perhaps even more so. To throw stones at a bottle till the bottle is broken has been one of the miniature pleasures of life since the beginning of bottles. There was always a certain satisfaction to be had from throwing a stone through the window of a street lamp. One of the pleasantest evenings of my childhood was spent with other small boys in playing hockey with a clergyman's armoury of croquet mallets till not a mallet was left whole. No croquet mallet was ever made that could withstand the fierce impacts of hockey, and, as one mallet after another was smashed in twain, our joy was unconfined. I have even known a child who enjoyed killing flies, like Domitian or whoever it was. But I doubt whether the little girl who rejoiced in the spectacle of damaged London had this vice of destructiveness. She was simply, it seemed to me, a small creature going round the picture-gallery of the world and making exclamations of delight at everything worth looking at that she saw.

After all, we older people in our love of sights cannot claim any moral superiority to her. How pleasant it is to be shown over a church where Cromwell's men once knocked off the noses of, or otherwise mutilated, the figures on the tombs! To be interested in such things does not imply agreement with Cromwell's men; but, if Cromwell's men did such things, we like to see the effects of the things they did. In the same spirit, we go to the Colosseum in Rome—a spirit of curiosity rather than of reprobation of the emperors who for their amusement once had Christians thrown to lions in that abominable arena. We do not approve of the emperors: in fact, we are shocked by them; but we feel that an hour or so may be profitably spent in visiting the scene of such atrocious happenings. If our imaginations were more sensitive, and if the past were as real to us as the present—our own present—we should feel such a passion of hatred in the shadow of the Colosseum walls as the Covenanters felt by the gravesides of their martyrs. But the past is seldom wholly real to us. Mr. Shaw makes us laugh in *Androcles*—not without touching our hearts—at Rome of the uneven tussles between the Christians and the lions. Yet Mr. Shaw is more sensitive than most of us. As for the rest of us, we tolerate the intolerable Bluebeard as a figure in a nursery fairy-tale, and all through our lives are inclined to treat that still more odious anti-feminist, Henry VIII, as a comic character. This does not mean that with half our hearts we sympathise with the vices of monsters. It means simply that our imaginations are so restricted that we can scarcely realise what crime and horror are till they reach our own doorstep.

It is a debatable question whether the limited responses of the imagination are to be deplored or to be accepted as an essential of sane existence. If our imaginations could comprehend all the cruelties of life, from the days of Cain to the time of the high-minded Torquemada, and from Torquemada's to our own incomparable date, how could we live either so pleasantly or so efficiently? There is a mercy in nature which blinds us to too much sight of horrors outside our own experience. The people who run to see a fire have not the same emotions as the man whose house is on fire. They are rubbernecks in comparison with a sufferer. Perhaps it is as well.

Even in regard to our own experiences, memory provides us with a kind of window through which we can enjoy looking at many things in the past that at the time of their occurrence were not enjoyable. The first Latin sentence that was ever taught to me by my elders was the Virgilian: "*Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit*"; and I have often thought that it proved Aeneas to be no mean psychologist. Our early terrors as we approached the dentist's chair—how insupportable they would be if they remained as acute in retrospect as they were at the moment when the butcher with the forceps bent down over our helpless faces! I speak, of course, of a distant age when dentists were not artists and there was no analgesic needle to secure us against the pangs of a molar bloodily torn up by the roots. As a reminiscence, however, a bygone experience in the dentist's chair is mainly amusing.

Twice I was nearly drowned, and, though the thing happened on each occasion too suddenly to be as terrifying as I should have expected, it was unpleasant: yet, in memory, my all-but-drowning has become something agreeably seen through a window. I should not now, like to have missed those experiences that had no sugar of happiness in them. I met a man recently who told me that when he was driving a tractor one day during a thunderstorm, the machine was struck by lightning that swept along his arms and tore the hair off his forearms before dis-

appearing into the earth; and, though he said: "Whenever a thunderstorm's coming on, ever since then, I feel my stomach turning over and over," yet, as there was no thunderstorm in the air as he talked, his face was bright with enjoyment, almost a boastful enjoyment, of a terror no longer present. To be as sharply aware of the past as of present pain is to be in danger of becoming embittered and neurotic. Dickens remembered much of his childhood with humiliation, but, even so, he looked through a window on a world that was much more laughable than it can have seemed at the time when he was living in it. Griefs and humiliations survive, but, except occasionally, they are mitigated by time. "Fond memory brings the light of other days around me." This means more than that in other days we lived in a Utopia of happiness.

The past, however, has become in part a spectacle and, forgetting much, we can see it at times more or less in the same spirit in which the little girl cried out: "Look, mummy, look! Damage, damage, damage!" Whatever else it may have been, it has at least become, so far as we are concerned, enormously, topsiturvilly interesting.

Y.Y.

THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF FUTURISM

THIRTY years ago, in the spring of 1912, the Italian Futurists opened their Exhibition in London, which had been brought over from Paris under the fashionable auspices of the critic Meyer Sée. It was a first-rate sensation. Everyone went to it and almost everyone laughed at it. The catalogue contained pages of explanation, but nobody really knew what it was all about. By the end of the season London had forgotten Futurism. English painting remained stolidly unaffected by this novelty, and Mr. Nevinson was the only well-known English painter to be at all influenced by it. It was all forgotten, except one thing: the name. For some odd reason the public fastened on "Futurism" as describing everything that was advanced and modern. It was applied to everything, including the "Jazz" decoration of the early 1920's. It is by no means extinct even now in provincial England, and has had much the same history of misuse as the word "Bolshevist."

Futurism, as a means of expression in painting, died young and left no progeny. Some of its ideas, however, survived in the written word, and in the years immediately after the last war began to take a more definite shape. Finally, by 1922, Futurism merged itself in Fascism, and Mussolini took over the whole Futurist box-of-tricks. The ideas of Futurism were very easily assimilated to those of Fascism.

The begetter of Futurism, and also its shepherd along the path to Fascism, was T. F. Marinetti. It all began in 1909, when Marinetti published in the Paris *Figaro* a manifesto about Futurist poetry. In 1910 five Italian painters published in Turin a manifesto about Futurist painting. This manifesto was signed by Boccioni, Carra, Russolo and Balla, all of Milan, and Gino Severini, of Paris. Of these, Severini's is the only name to have survived—perhaps because he alone escaped the provincialism of Milan. In 1912 came the exhibition in Paris and London, and that was the end, outside Italy, of Futurist painting. But writings about it appeared sporadically from the presses of Milan and Turin during the war, mostly by Marinetti, and in 1920 appeared Marinetti's *Manifesti del Futurismo* in four volumes. The climax came in 1922 with his *Futurismo e Fascismo*. By that time nobody in London or Paris was taking the Futurists seriously any longer. Mr. Clive Bell published his *Since Cézanne* in 1922; that is a very thorough review of the developments in painting during the previous fifteen years, yet all he says of the Futurists is "The work of Severini, their most creditable representative, is to be found *chez* Rosenberg. However, most of the Futurists have retired to their own country, where we will leave them."

The Futurists were great on *manifesti*, and must have provided the models for Mussolini. The 1912 catalogue, a slim little pamphlet, contains no less than three. It also, of course, contains a catalogue of the pictures; there were only 34 of them, and they hardly seem to count when compared with the torrent of verbiage that accompanied their display.

The language of these *manifesti* is wonderfully bombastic and self-assertive, and has an air about it that is very familiar to the readers of Signor Gayda:

"We wish to glorify War—the only health-giver of the world." "There is no more beauty except in strife. No masterpiece without aggressiveness." "Art can be nought but violence, cruelty and injustice." "We stand upon the summit of the world and cast our challenge to the stars!" Mussolini mouthing on the Palazzo Venezia balcony during the Abyssinian campaign? No, Marinetti in 1909.

The exhibitors' address to the public was just as prophetically true to a type that was then in process of being evolved. It began in a style reminiscent of the Duce's earlier manner. "We may declare, without boasting, that the first exhibition of Italian Futurist painting is the most important exhibition of Italian painting which has hitherto been offered to the judgment of Europe." This relatively modest statement, however, was succeeded by a more full-blooded rhetoric, with the familiar trick of dismissing other people's opinions as beneath contempt. "Our art," shouted Signore Boccioni, Carra, Russolo, Balla and Severini in 1912, "will probably be accused of tormented and decadent cerebralism. But we shall merely answer that we are, on the contrary, the primitives of a new sensitiveness, multiplied hundredfold, and that our art is intoxicated with spontaneity and power."

The Futurists talked a great deal about what they were trying to do. They proclaimed their contempt for all imitation, "good taste," "harmony," art-critics, museums and the nude. They proclaimed that their art was "a species of plastic dynamics," and that its basis was to be "the painting of states of mind."

The adverse point of view was that held, for example, by *The Graphic*, which said, "Emotions, experiences, noises, headaches, vertigo, absinthe, these are the things which the Futurists try to express in terms of paint. They do not yet," the writer added tartly, "express them in terms of art."

There is one passage in the painters' manifesto to the public in which they nearly lapsed into graciousness. "We admire," they said, "the heroism of Picasso, Braque, Derain"; but they continued, "(yet) we feel ourselves absolutely opposed to their art. They continue obstinately to paint all the static aspects of nature . . . ageing and petrifying their art with an obstinate attachment to the past. We, on the contrary, pertaining essentially to the future, seek for a style of motion."

These tough guys from Milan shouted their repudiation, not only of Academism, but of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism and Synthetism. What happened was that they thought they could be modern by painting modern things like electric light and automobiles—"a racing motor-car, adorned with great pipes like snakes with explosive breath"—thus still in fact holding to the illustrative and imitative view. Since the general tendency of significant painting in this century has been away from that view, the Futurists dropped right out.

Their political *influence* has probably been nil. Fascism would have come in without Marinetti. But their political *usefulness* for Mussolini was probably considerable in 1921–22. Even so Marinetti was made less use of than he hoped or expected. But he is still making speeches about Futurism to young Fascists, and may be heard over the Rome radio.

JOHN STEEGMAN

SYLPHIDES

In celestial realms of ballet
Vestris lightly talked with Sallé,
Blasis argued with Noverre,
Johannsen was laughing there;
When Saint Peter, drawing near,
Whispered in Petipa's ear
"Have you heard that Fokine's dead?"
Like the wind the whisper sped
Where Diaghilev relaxed
Talking shop with Léon Bakst.
Hearing it he gave a smile:
"We will welcome him in style."

Standing sadly at the gate
Fokine mused about his fate,
Till Saint Peter, with a grin,
Said, "You may as well come in."
So he entered, ill at ease.
Then he saw beneath the trees
The immortal nymphs in white.
As he paused in rapt delight,
Gently swelled through all high heaven
Chopin's Prelude Number Seven.

PADDY PERCIVAL

THE MOVIES

"The Big Shot," at Warner's
"Invisible Agent," at the Regal
"My Gal Sal," at the Odeon

Not many weeks ago Mr. Humphrey Bogart was spending a night running the Fifth Column to earth. Gangsters (on the screen) are wonderfully patriotic, and we are sentimental enough to believe that in wartime they become good G-men. The Black Market? No, no, if it came out that our gallants of the tommy-gun were occupied *there*, entertainment might suffer. So, with the war in its fourth year, the old gangster world goes on. Murder no longer thrills as it did; there are fewer killings, more cracks. But here is Mr. Bogart again, the prince of that world, in a film that recaptures earlier glories. How often we have admired the poker-face, the quietly bared teeth, the neurotic daze punctured by telephone bells and revolver shots; in a succession of films he has perfected a role that both chills and evokes sympathy. His performance in *The Big Shot*, as a *maître* in decline, is among the best he has given. And, surprisingly, the situations, once so shocking, shock again. The break out of gaol, with sirens and searchlights going, is more frightening than any air-raid; there's a street battle between crooks and cops that guerilla warfare could hardly surpass in ruthlessness; and even the final car chase, on icy roads in the Adirondacks, unrolls a fresh excitement. There are moments near the beginning when *The Big Shot* looks like collapsing, but, these past, it swells triumphantly to its climax.

A drug that can make a man invisible is employed at the Regal against Hitler. I thought that the secret of this drug had passed away with Mr. Wells's hero, but apparently not. Its new possessor, working for the American Government, injects himself before baling out of an aeroplane over Germany and comes down discarding one garment after another. His subsequent adventures involve horseplay at the expense of the Nazis and the discovery of a plan for attacking America. *Invisible Agent*, with Peter Lorre, Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Edward Bromberg in the cast, is slightly better than it may sound. Some of the trick photography is amusing; but the film entirely lacks the conviction and dignity of Mr. Wells's original fantasy, to which the producers acknowledge a debt.

I so rarely go to "musicals," especially when they are colourful too, that *My Gal Sal* had for me the charm of novelty. A cigar-box charm; jaunty, flash, semi-tropical. The songs—Paul Dresser's, with modern additions—have a sweet tang; Miss Rita Hayworth sings them, and is an eyeful herself; Victor Mature takes the part of the composer, irresistibly disagreeable. If we must have Technicolor (and why not?) this seems to me the sort of film to suck up the dyes.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

Correspondence

RELIGION AND CIVILISATION

SIR,—The first half of what follows derives from reading *The Study of History*, a *magnum opus* which has not yet had either the cultural attention or the popularising that it deserves, although it may well rank with *The Origin of Species* and *The Golden Bough*; indeed, a modern Huxley to Toynbee's Darwin is badly wanted.

Put briefly, here are a few suggested "axioms":

(*a*) Civilisations are members of the genus "Human Society," which contains at least two distinct species—"Primitive Societies" and "Civilisations": the first of the latter evolved into existence about 6,000 years ago.

(*b*) Civilisation as a single continuous process does not exist and never has existed, although commonly thought of and treated as such.

(*c*) Among the creative causes of any civilisation the spiritual one is of vital importance.

(*d*) Pauline Christianity (a thing very different from anything to be discovered in the life or authentic teachings of Jesus) provided the spiritual mainspring of the successful Western Civilisation.

(*e*) That Western Civilisation has now committed effective suicide by its failure to suppress internecine wars, in exactly the same way as did some of its predecessors, now dead.

In our case it may be said that, on a planet grown too small for such parochialism, the constituent States within our civilisation refused to behave in international relations as if they were, as they are, "members one of another"; we have clung to our "nationalisms" long after it became apparent that they were lethally poisonous in the body politic of our civilisation.

(*f*) The opportunity at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, for setting up in Europe a Society of States based on collective security, equitable arbitration of disputes and dynamic provision for peaceful change, was missed, and it was thereafter too late.

(*g*) The Sinic, Hindic, Orthodox Christian (Russian) and Islamic are the four other surviving civilisations.

(*h*) To treat "Christianity" as if it were the sole culture capable of inspiring our New World, as did the Bishop of London in a broadcast, is a fatal error: it ignores the existence of the other four civilised cultures in a small world.

If the ethics of Jesus are to contribute fully towards building a world civilisation they can do so only by being embodied in an acceptable world religion. To bring this about much unusual courage and common sense will be wanted; many unpleasant facts must be faced squarely by the "orthodox" and most of what passes for "Christianity" to-day must be scrapped. In parenthesis, let us ponder the famous schoolboy's definition of Faith as "what makes some folk say they believe what they know ain't so."

To an enormous number of the most educated and cultured Europeans the following dogmas or beliefs (the list is by no means exhaustive) are either nonsense or so without supporting evidence as not to be worth bothering about in practice:

The fall of man, virgin births of incarnate gods, the virtue of cannibalism as a tolerable symbolism, atonement for sin by human or other animal sacrifice; resurrection of the body; the existence and activities of angels and devils; hell and last judgment; a Deity that interferes personally in processes of nature; divine inspiration of any book, etc., etc.

In bringing to healthy birth the new civilisation that is now in such painful gestation, only ruthlessly brave, intellectually honest and spiritually revolutionary moral doctors will be any use, if the child is not to prove an abortion. This is true even more in the central clinic of religion than in the more perimetal ones of mere politics or economics.

For a start, will our Church leaders tell us openly how much they believe of the thirty-nine Articles they subscribe to officially and of the Creeds they recite?

Bath. WILLIAM ROSS

PROSPECT FOR RELIGION

SIR,—Professor Joad's comments on the "spiritual frustration" of our society are exceptionally relevant. But in demanding a "revolutionary reorganisation" of the Church as the *sine qua non* of a revitalisation of religion he seems to take one thing for granted—the capacity of the clergy for accomplishing such a reform.

The strength of an army depends in the last resort on the skill and courage of the individuals who compose it. That remains true whether the army is fighting for the things of this world or of the next. No one would deny the dynamic qualities of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, but what of those whom he leads? The elder clergy as a whole may be sympathetic to "root and branch" reform, but with few exceptions they lack the crusading zeal to put it into effect. The main reserves of energy and idealism must come, if at all, from the younger men. But they are an unprepossessing lot. The drift from the cloister to the hearth during the last two decades has included a process of dysgenic selection among ordinands and young clergymen. If the able men of the present generation have shown any interest in transcendent things it has been by way of a luke-warm pantheism or, as Professor Joad mentions, the meditative techniques of Huxley and Heard. The orthodox Church they have avoided like the plague. Still less have they thought of entering its ranks. Consequently the Church's recruits in recent years have been largely deficient in intellectual and moral vigour. To describe them as mental eunuchs might be harsh, but I remember hearing the Abbot of an English monastery lamenting that the chief quality common to his novices was an aptitude for athletics. His experience may be unique. Be that as it may, the general conclusion would appear to be that the Church is affected less by its "dead hand" than a softening of its brain. And that bodes ill for a "revolutionary reorganisation."

D. J. MITCHELL

O.C.T.U., R.A.C., Camberley.

SIR,—I hope that if I confine myself to correcting him on a point of fact, Sydney Dark won't make the mistake of supposing that I fear to meet him on the points of controversy. But points of controversy occupy space, as the flood of letters, tracts, pamphlets and books that my articles have evoked bear literal witness, while a point of fact can be fined down to a couple of lines.

I did not say that church-going, scanty before the war, had dwindled since "on the authority of a number of unnamed clergymen," but on that of a Mass-Observation Report from which I quoted figures. Mr. Dark may think Mass-Observation Reports poor authority, but this Report was my authority; I said that it was, and it was not the authority that he imputes to me. I said, no controversy, but I cannot resist the temptation of asking him why he should wish to throw doubt upon a phenomenon to whose reality most of the rest of his letter convincingly testifies.

C. E. M. JOAD

4, East Heath Road, N.W.3.

THE CIVIL SERVICE

SIR,—Neither Mr. Davenport nor Mr. Mallalieu, whose book he reviewed in your last issue, has been sparing in his criticism of the Civil Service. Civil Servants themselves realise that there is ground for criticism and many of them are trying to find remedies, but little has so far been said of the problems with which they are confronted.

The number of Civil Servants in April, 1939, was 340,000—an inflated figure, with many persons appointed to posts in anticipation of war. The figure to-day is in the region of 700,000, and nearly 100,000 pre-war Civil Servants are in the Forces; thus, half a million officials to-day are newcomers, whose initiative and capacity cannot have been destroyed by prolonged

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acquaintance with peacetime methods; nor can it be said that they are content to hibernate in the security of Government offices until their pensions are due, because, being temporary Civil Servants, they have no security and no pension.

The wartime Civil Service has received a generous dilution of industrial and business genius, and many of the new arrivals are occupying high and influential posts. Three business experts were appointed by Sir Horace Wilson to advise him and the Treasury on methods of organisation in Government departments; the Treasury has set up an Organisation and Methods Branch, with agencies in the larger departments and with personnel recruited largely from business establishments outside. The results are certainly not commensurate with the scale of the efforts. It has been suggested that this vast army of acquired experience cannot break down the opposition of the permanent Civil Servants—a poor tribute to the ruthlessness and determination for which the business expert is famed and a commendation of the capacity of the higher Civil Servants to fight a defensive action, which I do not believe is wholly deserved.

Certainly the Civil Service needs reforming, and many suggestions have been made about the nature of the reforms that are necessary. There is, however, a phase of this problem about which very little has been said. Tradition and regulations require Civil Servants to preserve a position of political neutrality, which few with a sense of their responsibility of citizenship can possibly achieve. Restrictions of this sort produce a Civil Servant whose outlook on life becomes so detached as to be almost irrelevant. Some restriction is probably necessary upon members of those grades responsible for formulating policy; for the rest, it should surely be the aim to make them interested in and not indifferent to all that is going on in the political arena, so close to them physically but so remote from them in every other way.

But these reflections are concerned with the peacetime Civil Service, and to-day we are confronted with a more urgent problem. Under prevailing conditions, the public Service is tending to become a "racket"—a wartime refuge for many men and women with little worth while to contribute, who either need the salary, relish the prestige, or seek to avoid more exacting forms of war service. Influential friends or relatives have managed to manipulate them into posts, and it is in the knowledge of this that many Civil Servants required to work under them will agree with Mr. Davenport's conclusion that "it is not enough for Civil Servants to say that they are incorruptible." The Establishment Division of the Treasury has been unable to stem the tide; its morale seems to have been shattered by a series of defeats in which it was made to realise the ease with which Ministerial support can be utilised in certain cases by those with friends and relatives whom they wished to "place." Mr. Bevin's Ministry is no more successful.

This sort of thing was done on a smaller scale during the last war to secure permanent posts in the higher grades when the war ended. This immediate problem may, therefore, affect the structure of the post-war Civil Service if the country overcomes the obstructions to successful effort which the presence of these unqualified public officials creates and, in spite of them, manages to win the war.

L. C. WHITE
General Secretary,
The Civil Service Clerical Association

COLOURED TROOPS

SIR,—The original note and the correspondence on this subject reflect an old-fashioned nineteenth century attitude deplorably out of touch with the modern scientific approach. It is obvious that the human race has to despise and kick around some of the species, and that if the *herrenvolk* complex is repressed it manifests itself in pimples, blackheads, and carpet-biting. I therefore submit the following constructive proposals. On the model of the Foreign Legion a corps should be formed of Voluntary Lesser Breeds. Without the Law. The function of this corps would be to act as a grand cathartic at the appropriate times and places, thus diverting pogroms and dragonnades from the dagos, wops, coolies, chinks and niggers, to lay nothing of the unfortunate people who get erroneously classified because of excessive sun-tan or an attack of jaundice. The V.L.B.s would be trained to step briskly off the side-walk and to march in the gutter. They would enter saloons and, on being informed that the igloo, ghetto and ditch-born were not served in the place, would slink out crestfallen amid the raucous jeers of the customers. They would retire discomfited from hotel desks on the simple word of the reception clerk that the half-empty place had no room vacant. Periodically they would be shanghaied into cattle trucks and dumped into the desert with fearsome admonitions as to what they would get if they showed their dirty faces again. They would, of course, be shuttlecocked between the various immigration quarantines and serve long terms for vagrancy after being refused employment. There is one stipulation. In the course of their buffetings the V.L.B.s would compile a roll of their most fervid persecutors, and as a form of sabbatical leave they would run a camp every seven years in which a course in the elementary decencies would be given to the outstanding exponents of the where-I-come-from-we-kick-'em-off-the-pavement creed. I may add that I am prepared to enl in the corps since membership would roughly corr spond to the present status of academic economist

G. L. SCHWARTZ

UNITY IN EXILE

SIR,—In the "London Diary" of this week issue I read with considerable interest Critic's remar about the fact that Communists have joined o Trade Union Centre. To avoid any possibility misunderstanding, I should like to point out that membership with our group has only one pr condition. The applicant has to prove that he i genuine Trade Unionist or that he has the hone intention to become a genuine and trustworthy Tra Unionist. Consequently, there are not only "refuge of both parties"—as Critic suggests—members of o group, but, in addition, a fair number of refuge who are not connected with political parties at a It is not advisable to deal with Trade Union matte in terms of party politics. Therefore, it is not corre to state that "*the* Communists" have joined o group. To apply for membership is a matter for ea individual, not for groups of people. That a numb of Communists applied for membership and wa accepted is correct; I hope that Critic's optimist assumption that "a change of atmosphere" has be brought about, will prove true. Trade Union wo offers many possibilities to real Trade Unionist Party quarrels do not belong to the problems we ha the desire to deal with.

HANS GOTTFURCHT, Chairman
Trade Union Centre for German Workers in Great Britain.

NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL

SIR,—I notice with interest the letter in your la issue headed "Peace Aims" appealing for a Cam paign Fund of £5,000 to enable the National Peac Council to carry out work on this problem.

For the benefit of those who are keenly interested in the question, I venture to think that it would b desirable for a definite statement to be made by tho responsible for the appeal as to the nature of the peac aims they have in mind. In the past the Nation Peace Council has contained a considerable body o those who are quite sincerely, from religious or othe motives, opposed to the use of force altogether in th solution of international problems.

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GEOFFREY LE M. MANDER
House of Commons.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

ARNOLD BENNETT'S passion for occupational literature led him to say that *Life on the Mississippi* was Mark Twain's greatest book. Up to half-way through, the book is indeed a model of what well-posted reminiscence ought to be. Anyone with a trade or craft to write about would keep Twain's autobiographical episode before his eyes. But it is no more than the midwife to *Huckleberry Finn*; or rather, it describes the soil from which a great work of the imagination grew. The *Life* enables us to see something of the process of Mark Twain's talent, something of what happened to his mind when he reached that point in life when imagination feels the full, revitalising force of childhood memory. The experience is common enough. Who is not so charmed by himself that he cannot write well about his own childhood? The uncommon thing is for one's childhood to have any more than a personal significance. Here Twain was as fortunate in his way as Defoe had been with another kind of story. The nostalgia for savage childhood in *Huckleberry Finn* and the dream island theme in *Robinson Crusoe* are universal subjects, but they are given an imaginative power and authority by their historical context. *Robinson Crusoe* is more than playing at islands; it seems to sum up the effect of the momentous 200 years of pioneering and discovery upon the human imagination and character. The book is a kind of judgment. It defines prophetically a new type of human being. And one might say that Tom Sawyer was one of Crusoe's posterity. Similarly of *Huckleberry Finn* one feels that it is a judgment on a period and on an immense human experience: on the hard but picturesque revolt against a civilisation, on the reversion to anarchy in order that something new may be made. The story resumes all the things which Americans understood by "the Frontier tradition" out of which a vital American idiosyncracy was born. In the words of Huck Finn himself:

> I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilise me, and I can't stand it. I been there before.

"The territory" (in the more learned words of Prof. F. J. Turner, in his work on *The Significance of the Frontier in American Life*), was the "free land" in "continuous recession" where the American intellect was to find its native character. In his great book, Twain seems not only to have assimilated and summed up the oral literature of the Frontier, as Defoe soaked up the narratives of discovery, but to have gone down to the heart of the Frontier character, to have written, unwittingly, out of the forces that were melting down and refashioning American life.

We turn to *Life on the Mississippi* and those intuitions have not yet been felt. The great river is no longer "kinda lazying along" in Huck's sleepy and pungent vernacular, but is seen through the quick eyes of the educated reporter and in the munificence of a droll memory. A period, not a process, is being described and one has an indeed unforgettable picture of those rows of steamboats at the wharves, showering the woodsmoke from their Gothic funnels on to the towns, while the crowds fight, preach, swindle and jostle, while the bands play and the flags wave and the pilots go aboard like princes. The Civil War and the railroads killed the steamboat traffic and Twain was reviving the memory of a glory in which he had partaken. There he is, a boy and cub-pilot once more, being initiated into the science and superstitions of a once godly profession, learning the two great American religions—how to loaf and how to work. The mysteries of the river come back to him; its habits of changing its length, of altering its course, of moving its channels, its reefs and its shoals. He recalls its famous cut-outs, its calamities and its jokes. Incidents, formidable to the profession but obscure to the layman, like Mr. Bixley's famous passing of Hat Island in less than six feet of water, are given their local heroic standing:

> Now the engines were stopped altogether and we drifted with the current. Not that I could see the boat drift, for I could not, the stars being all gone by this time. This drifting was the dismalist work; it held one's heart still. Presently I discovered a blacker gloom than that which surrounded us. It was the head of the island. We were closing right down upon it. We entered its deep shadow, and so imminent seemed the peril that I was likely to suffocate, and I had the strongest impulse to do *something*, anything to save the vessel. But still Mr. Bixley stood by his wheel, silent, intent as a cat, and all the pilots stood shoulder to shoulder at his back. . . . Fully to realise the marvellous precision required in laying the great steamer to her marks in that murky waste of water, one should know that not only must she pick her intricate way through snags and blind reefs, and then shave the head of the island so closely as to brush the overhanging foliage with her stern, but at one place she must pass within arm's reach of a sunken and invisible wreck.

The pilots of the Mississippi had found their worshipper.

When we read the violent incidents, such as the blowing up of the *Pennsylvania*, the story of the Darnell and Watson feud, the fight with Brown, the bullying pilot, and the history of the negro-snatching gangs and their murders, we feel again the lack of Huck's voice. Here and there, as in the pilot who let on he was a disinherited duke, we see the beginning of an episode in the great book, and the lack of that drooling, drawling voice is painful. Everything that was good in Twain came out of the Frontier. The vernacular of the Frontier was especially necessary to him, for he was its first literary master. There is more in it than a turn of phrase. That tangy, knowing speech was the recitative of a folk tradition and especially the tradition of poetic and grotesque exaggeration for which Twain had genius. In *Life on the Mississippi* there are several unhappy references by the reformed Twain to the absence of genteel speech; and one can see the loss to Twain's talent most clearly in the chapter which was to have gone into *Huckleberry Finn* but which, for some reason, was left out and put into the *Life*. The dead voices of the old keelboatmen, perhaps the words of the legendary Mike Fink himself, are heard in those heroic speeches made before the great fight which, of course, did not come off:

> Whoo-oop! I'm the original iron-jawed, brass-mounted, copper-bellied corpse maker from the wilds of Arkansaw—look at me. I'm the man they call Sudden Death and General Desolation. . . . Stand back and give me room according to my strength! Blood's my natural drink and the wails of the dying is music to my ear! Cast your eye on me, gentleman!—and lay low and hold your breath, for I'm about to turn myself loose.

He is answered by "the child of calamity" who can boil the gulf of Mexico, suck clouds dry as a sponge, and who buries his dead "on my own premises." And when this fantastic spouting has collapsed, we get back to folk talk:

> And then they got talking about differences between hogs and their different kind of habits; and next about women and their different ways; and the next about the best ways to put out houses that was afire; and next about what ought to be done with the Injuns; and next about what a King had to do and how much he got; and next how to make cats fight . . . and the Child of Calamity said that a man who drunk Mississippi water could grow corn in his stomach if he wanted to. He says, "You look at the graveyards; that tells the tale. Trees won't grow worth chucks in a Cincinnati graveyard, but in a Sent Louis graveyard they grow upwards of 800 feet high. It's all on account of the water the people drunk before they laid up. A Cincinnati corpse don't richen a soil any".

But that is a diversion in Twain's document. The dry sexton-like cackle here and there picks out a character. The jokes hit off the spirit of an age—"The first time I saw St. Louis I could have bought it for six million dollars and it was the mistake of my life that I didn't do it"—but the real business is the serious description of the skilled pilot's trade. That is fascinating because the river lives and deceives; and Twain himself, as a one-time pilot, had its snares and its changes by heart. He watches a sunset. Here the river was turned blood red; there a log came floating, black against the light; farther away the water was boiling in little tumbling opalescent rings. But he says:

> This sun means we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means the river is rising, small thanks to it; the slanting mark in the water refers to a bluff or a reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboats one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling "boils" show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the line and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously.

The growing sense of his own skill and science, which the boy feels, drives out his feeling for the beauty of the scene. That is a familiar aspect of the Frontier spirit, and an especially familiar idea in the mind of Mark Twain. Huck, it will be remembered, attacked Tom Sawyer, because of his weakness for the romantic "Sunday school stuff". Skill, the poetry of work, cunning, trickery, courage, success and catastrophe—these things Twain's Frontier mind understands; the idea of the beautiful embarrasses and makes him awkward. Perhaps an innate suspicion of the beautiful is the irritant which starts the comic sense in all humorous writers; but when one looks at Twain's many attacks on romance and especially at his attack on Sir Walter Scott's novels in this book—he has a huge crack about Scott being responsible for the Civil War—one laughs but one sees that this hard-bitten shrewdness of Twain's conceals a wound in his sensibility. The Frontier is cut off from the past, for the past is so much lumber to the makers of a new world. The only trouble is that the operation has been done without an anaesthetic. The past has been hacked off. And one of the intuitions which makes the greatness of *Huckleberry Finn* is the perception that many, like Huck himself, lose the past without getting a new world in exchange for it. The great river collects the wreckage and the Frontier becomes a backwater.

V. S. PRITCHETT

NEW ANTHOLOGIES

An Anthology of Religious Verse. Edited by NORMAN NICHOLSON. *Pelican.* 9*d*.

Poetry in Wartime. Edited by M. J. TAMBIMUTTU. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s*.

Poems of This War. Edited by PATRICIA LEDWARD and COLIN STRANG. *Cambridge University Press.* 5*s*.

One thing the war has done for literature is to restore a rarity value to books. The classics aren't scarce, but one may have to ask at half-a-dozen shops before obtaining a copy of *Tristram Shandy* or *War and Peace*. Marvell's poems, *Oblomov*, *Death's Jest Book* or *My Life and Hard Times* would mean a trail of weeks. As a result these books have perhaps fewer readers to-day, but those who read do so with increased attention. Every book is no longer—for the soldier or airman on leave, the civil servant in Bournemouth—always in season; there are gaps, waiting lists, dead ends; "out of print," we are told, again and again, "unobtainable," and the baffled seeker may then turn to Miss Blandish, but more likely the value of Marvell will be enhanced. This applies even to new books, which sell out as never before. The ration leaves us hungry, so that any volume good of its kind has ten possible buyers for one in the past. Mr. Norman Nicholson's *Anthology of Religious Verse* is appearing on the bookstalls alongside a Penguin Special on Japan, some reprints of popular novels, two expert discussions by strategists. It stands more than a good chance; the eye of the casual browser may be caught by the subtitle "Designed for the Times" and by the businesslike introduction; the more experienced will note an unusual flavour in many of Mr. Nicholson's choices. "Designed for the Times" is not,

by the way, a very apt description. It suggests an anthology of religious poetry in general, made in the light of current belief or taste; whereas in fact, with only a few exceptions, the poems selected are by living writers. One poem of Hardy ("The Oxen"), one of Yeats, two of Lawrence, three of Hopkins: that is the extent of reaching back. It is no disparagement of Mr. Nicholson's book to say that these poems shine out from its pages. Yeats's "The Second Coming" contains two of the most memorable lines written in our time:

> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

But if one Yeats poem, why not two? If Hopkins, why not Patmore? Why not Browning, Emily Brontë, Christina Rossetti, and so on? In all English literature there is no stronger or more separate thread than its religious poetry, and to snap it at any point seems arbitrary. Perhaps, with only a hundred pages to fill, Mr. Nicholson has done best to give nearly all his space to the living. The quality of his material may surprise even those who consider themselves well-read in contemporary verse. (Lord David Cecil's *Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, admirable in its historical perspective, trails off disappointingly when it reaches the present; and possibly in making his selection Mr. Nicholson has rather consciously made his own book a pendent.) There is the Eliot of "A Song for Simeon" and of choruses from the plays; not an unfamiliar Eliot, but in these surroundings both his poetical stature and the affirmative moments lighting up resignation are emphasised. Here, too, he has influenced others, but more by his example than by technical tricks too easily borrowed. It is remarkable that in a book so closely bound in outlook the individual writers should be not less, but more, distinct than is usually the case with anthologies. This goes without saying for Auden, de la Mare, Belloc, and the poets already mentioned; but it is true also of David Gascoyne and Andrew Young, two very different writers whose contributions here are equally impressive; and there are others of whom I have never heard —S. L. Bethel, George Every, J. D. C. Pellow— but who henceforth will exist for me as poets. Between the landmarks and the discoveries we avoid, too, the usual limbo of those who— whenever an anthology is bruited—have to be there. Some of the omissions might need a little explaining. But Mr. Nicholson's is too good a book to need criticism of that sort.

Neither of the war anthologies is up to Mr. Nicholson's level, though both—and especially *Poetry in Wartime*—have merits. The successes of Mr. Tambimuttu's collection—George Barker's "Sonnets from America," David Gascoyne's "Miserere" sequence, and isolated poems by Laurie Lee, Alun Lewis, Norman Nicholson, K. J. Raine and Anne Ridler—are something of a feather in the editor's cap, because the anthology has been compiled largely from his own magazine *Poetry*. Its sales should go up (paper allowing). But *Poetry in Wartime* has some of the limitations of its origin. Too many of its contributors are in the swim together; one page tends to read much like another; we may always come on a poem beginning "You look like history," or "A bird flies and I gum it to a concept." It is foolish (in the blurb) to claim: "This anthology is unique in that it is *not* an anthology of 'war poems,' but a collection of the best poems written since the beginning of the war." The best poems? "East Coker" isn't here, and there are gaps all along the line from Binyon to Betjeman. One poem each from Auden, Day Lewis, MacNeice, Spender, Rodgers. Obviously the Tambimuttu school has small respect for its elders, and to be a champion you have to be very young indeed, like the players of table-tennis. With this drawback, *Poetry in Wartime* is varied, talented, uneven and on the whole representative of the generation "since Auden."

Poems of this War is also an anthology of "a generation." The editors, Patricia Ledward and Colin Strang, have aimed at expressing the attitude of the young to war, and the book is divided into seven parts: war impending, poems by soldiers, air raids, death of friends, etc. In one respect, *Poems of this War* is a better anthology than *Poetry in Wartime*: it achieves a unity and order of its own, whatever one may think of the individual items. It is more dignified than the sillier parts of Mr. Tambimuttu's collection, but also contains only a third of the talent.

Reading these three anthologies, I have been impressed by one poet who appears in all of them: David Gascoyne. He has changed a lot since his surrealist days; and though the conversion has been neither as important nor as complete as that of Aragon, Gascoyne provides a minor parallel. His progress from dream labyrinths to a world of physical and spiritual realities has revealed an interesting and uneasy talent. I quote one of the shorter poems from "Miserere," which is reprinted by both Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Tambimuttu.

> "It is finished." The last nail,
> Has consummated the inhuman pattern, and the veil
> Is torn. God's wounds are numbered.
> All is now withdrawn: void yawns
> The rock-hewn tomb. There is no more
> Regeneration in the stricken sun,
> The hope of faith no more,
> No height no depth no sign,
> And no more history.
> Thus may it be: and worse.
> And may we know Thy perfect darkness.
> And may we into Hell descend with Thee.

Mr. Gascoyne's next volume of poetry will be worth looking out for. G. W. STONIER

A GREAT VICTORIAN

Octavia Hill. A Biography by E. MOBERLY BELL, with a Foreword by SIR REGINALD ROWE. *Constable.* 15s.

"It is true that she is probably the least widely known of all the great women of the Victorian Age," writes Miss Moberly Bell of Octavia Hill. This is the more surprising in that Miss Hill's career is vitally linked with the present day. The preservation of commons and footpaths, of open spaces in towns and wide tracts of free country (Octavia Hill was a founder of the National Trust), London's green belt, smoke abatement, community centres, youth clubs, the necessity for treating slum clearance and rehousing as a human problem and not only one of bricks and mortar; how familiar, how up to date it all is! No wonder that her biographer remarks: "In many things Octavia was not only ahead of her own generation but ahead of ours." But it is not as a chronicle of Causes that this book grips the reader from the first page to the last. Octavia's career was the direct outcome of her remarkable personality. Miss Moberly Bell tells her story naturally, and often with quiet humour; handling a vast amount of material with great skill.

The picture she gives of the Hill family will astonish those who have a fixed idea of a conventional Victorian household. Much was due to the personality of Mrs. Hill—Caroline Southwood Smith—a woman of outstanding character, a great educationist and child-lover. One wonders how her vigorous little girls coped with their many petticoats as they scrambled through hedges (Octavia seems to have loved to do this until quite late in life), raced across fields and jumped

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brooks. It is inspiring to read how Mrs. Hill, after her husband's bankruptcy and failure in health, took only the minimum of help from her father, and how she and her daughters supported themselves. At thirteen, Octavia designed toys, and supervised a workroom of illiterate, rough, and underfed child employees, improved their earning capacity, looked after their welfare, entertained them, and took them for picnics on half-holidays; and managed the entire toy-making business, including the accounts, of which she had no previous experience. Later the Hills had a school where the girls tackled a good academic curriculum and in summer went to a swimming bath and to row on Regent's Park lake. We have a picture of Octavia in public life working as the friend and equal of her male colleagues, and hiking with her friends thirty miles across country in the rain. Most surprising of all are the accounts of the work for which she was to become famous—the personal management of house property inhabited by some of London's poorest families. We read of the appalling housing conditions of the Seventies, of her early struggles, how she mastered the technicalities of the work, how she became the trusted friend of her tenants, of her desperate, but successful, efforts to teach the children to play; how, fearlessly, she visited the houses alone at night if necessary "feeling her way down stairs rounded by the hardened mud upon them." When her work had grown and she had a body of trained helpers, we see them coping with "an inkpot attached to the person," a collecting bag and books, "although the length of a fashionable skirt occupied one hand."

Octavia Hill stands out in the picture as an essentially simple and lovable individual for whom love of God and of her fellow men—the same thing to her—was the meaning and inspiration of life. Her personality was, nevertheless, complex, and as is often the case in a highly developed being, made up of many contradictions. She was at once other-worldly and practical, an artist and a business woman, formidable and gentle, reserved and spontaneous, sure of herself and touchingly humble. These are at first sight contradictions in her mental make-up, but her biographer resolves them convincingly. To Socialists it is exasperating that a woman of fine intellect and great force of character who was constantly thwarted in her humanitarian work by vested interests should not have made a frontal attack on Capitalism. No doubt Ruskin and Morris helped to form her philosophy, but it was the natural outcome, in Victorian times, of her own deepest convictions. The creative springs of her life were in her love of individuals and her respect for the dignity of human personality. Hence her belief in the all-importance of education, and her abhorrence of impersonal state control, of subsidies instead of good wages.

She would have been surprised if a magic crystal had shown her in 1942 "Octavia Hill" professional Housing Managers in demand by Government departments, and administering large State-subsidised municipal housing schemes. But what a cheering scrap of common sense this is in an almost Totalitarian world! For it signifies a recognition of human beings as individuals and families and not as units to be contained within four walls, at one-and-a-half persons per room. We should have been wise if we had listened to Miss Hill on the subject of space, on small groups as the medium of democracy and on many other subjects. It is not too late to take her advice.

IRENE T. BARCLAY

THE NEW POOTER

Life with Topsy. By DENIS MACKAIL. *Heinemann.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

> Why should I not publish my diary? I have often seen reminiscences of people I have never heard of, and I fail to see—because I do not happen to be a "Somebody"—why my diary should not be interesting. My only regret is that I did not commence it when I was a youth.

Thus the immortal Pooter; and opening *Life with Topsy* at random, one might suppose that Mr. Mackail was trying to create a modern equivalent of Pooter. His book is written in the first person, like *The Diary of a Nobody;* and the "I" is similarly innocuous and confident that everything that happens to him is of interest. But whereas the Grossmiths were satirising the lower middle class, Mr. Mackail's victim is the grandson of an eminent painter, the son of a very distinguished scholar, and was educated, so to speak, at Balliol. He is far more prosperous than Pooter: even in his early days when he describes himself as "a wage-slave" he employed three servants; and he records, modestly enough, repeated increases in his income. Bills, small ailments, visits to the theatre, little dinner parties—the main topics are much the same as in the Grossmith book. Occasionally there is a gem: *The Cherry Orchard* is described as an "insolent piece of amateurish drivel"; but the careful triviality of the comments is unequalled except in some of those memoirs by minor Royalties. Mr. Mackail exploits also, and with unrelenting thoroughness, a subject that is in truth highly tempting to the English satirist—the idolatry of dogs. The Topsy of the title is a Pekinese, and already on page 3 the "I" of the book fixes to the gable above Topsy's basket-work kennel a small flagstaff, and attaches to it a pennon. His wife also had a dog: "As I look back on these early days now, I can only admit that it was dashed good of her to put up with me at all. For she loved him." Thus the note is set for a book in which not only dogs, but cats, budgerigars, bullfinches and tame mice play a preponderant role.

There is a vivid moment later, when Topsy disappears.

> We didn't exactly find her. She just appeared again, almost exactly where we had seen her last, looking cool, calm, collected, and precisely as if, from her point of view, that hideous half-hour had been expunged from the record of time. Oh, what a relief! And still what a mystery, for unless the fairies had carried her off to play with them, I still can't imagine where she had been.

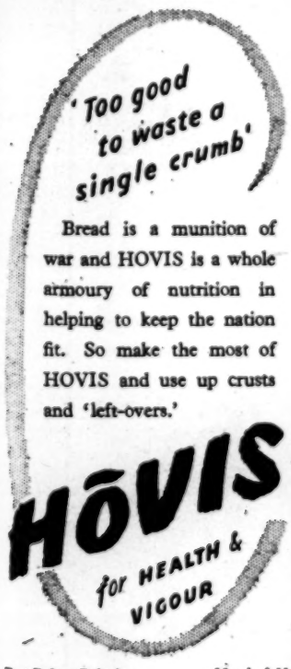
Playing with toy-trains and a toy-theatre is also important. "On my second birthday, so my mother had often told me, I promised her never to grow any older." The book, in fact, can be taken as a scrupulous study of a psychological type common especially, I fancy, in this country, the man who cannot or will not ever become adult.

Where Mr. Mackail scores is in his pitiless picture of how such a man responds to the public events of the decade of the war. He seeks to swaddle himself in the cosiest insularity, though once he goes all the way to Dieppe for a miserable week-end.

> I have always detested travelling myself, and always choke—even on an Underground platform—when I was at a departing train. Sensitive I suppose. Or stupid, or something.

But as the years pass, it becomes increasingly hard to go on pretending that there is no Europe. So the Foreign Office (1936) becomes the bugbear, because it is "provocative"! By 1938 a horrid thing called Czechoslovakia has been heard of in the nursery:

> There had been no such country when I was a child, and I am bound to say we all got on very well without it. . . I don't think it unfair to say that for at least nineteen years after the previous war only a very few of the compulsorily educated in this country had managed to distinguish between Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia. Surely even an unnecessary country should have a better name than these.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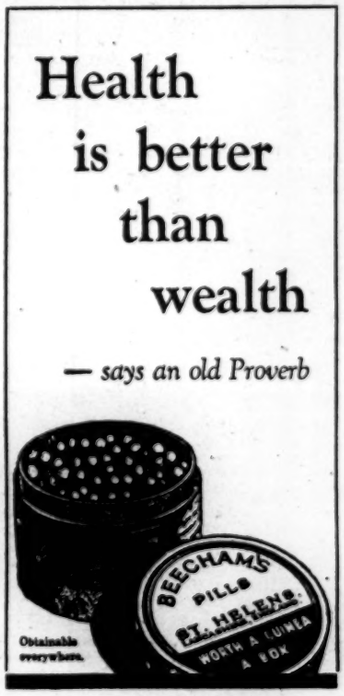

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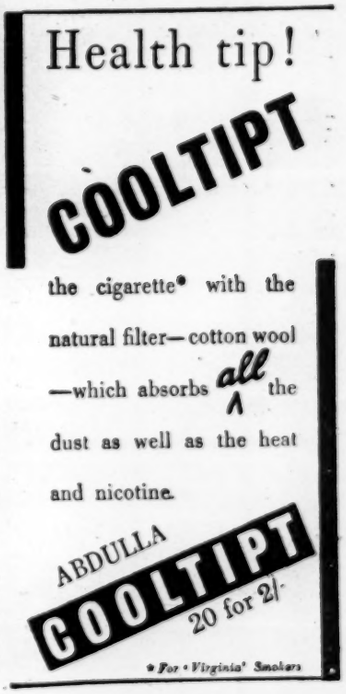
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Then Poland looms into the world of Peter Pan:

> There had been no Poland, except as a geographical term, in the days of my childhood, and again this had seemed no disadvantage to anybody else.

After Munich his wife and daughter bring him the truth about France:

> The French—or the French whom they met—were of opinion that there had been a good deal of fuss about nothing; which considering their own responsibility was certainly cheerful and calm. I understood, also, that they agreed with Hitler about the Jews. That they thought the British a more disturbing element than the Germans. But they had no particular objection to Mussolini. . . .

Then a touch quite worthy of Pooter:

> I didn't find it my duty to pass this information on to the British Government, who, after all, kept an Embassy in Paris, and were spending £350,000 a year on their Secret Service.

Mr Chamberlain ought to have sacked the entire Foreign Office and all our ambassadors; to have insisted on more and more meetings with Hitler. But he did not: "the leaders on both sides were muddlers and bunglers." "On both sides"—this comment written in 1942 on the Hitler of 1938 may seem to be too extravagant even for a satirist. But the fact is, of course, that Mr. Mackail's book is not a satire on the ignorance and suicidal selfishness of those who should have known better: it is a straightforward account of his own opinions and emotions.

By proclaiming his disapproval of the war, he has probably alienated many who enjoyed his books. But is one to applaud his courage, or to deplore his insensibility? There is something to admire in most pacificists, but Mr. Mackail's isolationism seems to me ignoble, insofar as it is not merely infantile. He had to evacuate to the country his favourite goldfish—what a nasty, horrid war!

He writes, it is true, with evident sincerity about the unspeakable suffering caused by war, and about the wickedness of hatred. P. G. Wodehouse had been a close friend:

> "I say, touching this matter of Pekes. . . ."
> "I say, when you get absolutely stuck in a story . . ."
> "I say, what do you *really* make of old Somerset M.?"

These were all Plum's openings, as we smoked and sipped, and hammered each subject with our mighty brains. Most enjoyable, I can tell you.

And when he heard "Plum" broadcasting from Berlin, he was "much moved." "The war couldn't go on without hatred, and Plum hated no one. That was his crime. He had had his punishment." It does not occur to Mr. Mackail that his own indifference to the fate of Czechs and Poles is as ugly as hatred, or that if our governors had persisted in a similar indifference, he would have had to decide whether to be a corpse or a lickspittle.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

EUROPE'S NEED OF FRANCE

This is not the End of France. By GUSTAV WINTER. *Allen and Unwin.* 12s. 6d.

In describing France's melancholy progress from Versailles to Munich, from Munich to Bordeaux and from Bordeaux to the coming revolution which cannot fail to bring about deep changes in France's social structure, the author of this solid and well-informed book has sought "to avoid anger and bias." He has succeeded; if the unforewarned reader detects that he is both a Czechoslovak and a Social-Democrat it will only be through the intimate knowledge of the French Left and of Franco-Czechoslovak relations displayed by Mr. Winter.

As much as for his faith in France, his book is conspicuous for his understanding of the French tragedy of the last twenty-four years. He is illuminating when he shows how the decline of French influence began "in the first months after the war, when France missed her opportunity of an inner regeneration and shirked her mission towards the outside world"; when the traditional missionary of revolutionary democracy turned inwards to the "short-sighted and reactionary provincialism" which led to Munich and Vichy. France's failure to lead the new-born European democracies of 1919 occasionally stirs up traces of bitterness, happily mitigated by the memory of those great Frenchmen Ernest Denis and Louis Eisenmann, who wove between France and the young Czechoslovak Republic close and comprehensive cultural bonds. But how many other opportunities were then lost of establishing cultural contacts with the classes which, as a result of the collapse of the Empires, succeeded all over Central and Eastern Europe the obsolete French-trained pre-war aristocracies? A Czechoslovak friend of France makes full allowance for the fact that she entered the post-war world in a crippled state, but his disappointed love leads him to resent her having entered it "without any clear idea of how she was to shape her post-war life."

There are few dull moments in an analysis which follows France through the vicissitudes caused by this unconscious abdication of her noblest traditions, through the worst ignominies of the various Vichy and Paris cliques, to an expression of confidence in her final revival and greatness. We are reminded of the whole series of absurd, tragic political accidents which have temporarily superimposed the mask of Laval over the face of the real France, who claims as her own men of such diverse and noble minds as Herriot and Blum, Mauriac and Gide, Bernanos and Duhamel, to quote but a few named by Mr. Winter. The problem of France's future, as he sees it, is not so much one of restoration of values as of once more applying to her official life, through economic and social readjustment, the values which never failed France. She will then be able to resume her historical mission as "a medium for progress, the mother of revolutions, the protectress of right and justice." Some sort of poetic justice makes it particularly fitting that a Czechoslovak should be the first author during the temporary eclipse of official France to proclaim in a book full of the sense of the ironies of history, that "the existence of a strong and prosperous France is essential to the existence of a strong and prosperous Europe."

JEROME JENATTON

A SOBER CHRONICLE

King Carol, Hitler and Lupescu. By A. L. EASTERMAN. *Gollancz.* 12s. 6d.

Hitler waged peace against Roumania before 1940 with such efficient political and economic instruments that, despite the *Diktat* of Vienna which gave Transylvania to Hungary, the Roumanians are dying for him as though for their own fatherland. In illustrating and analysing how Nazi statecraft converted the reluctant, British-guarantee-bound Roumania into a fervent axis ally, Mr. Easterman, a former chief correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, has written a most important book which may serve as a primer for anybody who is thinking, reading, talking, writing or acting about South-Eastern Europe after the war and now.

Not all the German business men in Roumania were what the press called "business men." They were business men sent to buy Roumania's oil, grain, copper, chromium and manganese. They were part of an integrated Nazi State-action which made Roumania, once Britain's ally, an economic client and political vassal to Germany. In the City of London, during 1939, British business men were arguing that Roumania was financially a bad risk. The Leith-Ross Economic Mission in Bucharest could only propose a £5,000,000 credit at 5½ per cent., a rate of interest ½ per cent. higher than the normal rate of inter-State credits. There were no acceptors in the City for Roumanian oil and wheat. The prices were "too high," the wheat was of "poor quality." The bankers and business men of the City were thinking of their balance-sheets while the statesmen of Whitehall were already trifling with the idea of a military guarantee to stop Germany's eastward drive. The Nazi business men knew that their contracts were part of State policy; for that reason, no price was too high, no quality too low, if it made the Roumanian peasant and industrialist a grateful dependent on Germany.

Until the Nazis obtained economic power in Roumania by methods little, if at all, worse than those normal in competitive trade, Carol was able to rule in the old-fashioned manner of an absolute monarch, surviving and engaging in palace intrigue. Mr. Easterman, who interviewed him and Mme. Lupescu in Roumania, gives a well-balanced account of the couple which may correct the popularised idea of Carol as a weak-willed red-nosed debauchee and his mistress as a strong-willed, red-haired Bacchante. Their twenty-year-old association, which the hostility and obscenities of a world of moralisers has failed to dissolve, suggests a constancy deserving honour. Carol showed far greater firmness in dealing with Hitler at Berchtesgaden than any of the diplomats who preceded him. Instead of collapsing when Hitler asked that Codreanu, the Iron Guard leader, be released, Carol answered, "No." And is alive to the present day.

Mr. Easterman's description of his own interview with Codreanu is the most exciting part of a narrative which is no less exciting because its ending is known. His mysterious drive from the Palace Athénée Hotel through a snow-storm, side by side with two armed Iron Guards whom he had met through a conversation about the *Capitanul* overheard in a café; his meeting with Codreanu, the murderer who in turn was murdered by Carol's police; the strange interview between the London journalist and the flatterable Iron Guard mystic in the Green House—they are the background of authenticity to Mr. Easterman's jungle-book of Roumanian politics. And yet, among the shootings and the frenzies of the Iron Guard, you can hear in the words of Tilea, the Roumanian Ambassador to Britain, and Dimancescu, his Press Counsellor, the civilised voices of men who asked that Roumania should have the first requirement of civilisation—economic stability. Britain, in 1938 and 1939, refused Roumania that opportunity. As Dimancescu wrote:

> Unfortunately those who were then in a position to accept our offer (of a trade agreement) spoke different languages from ours; they were interested in unpaid commercial debts, clearing arrangements, higher exchange rates for the pound sterling and especially in the rates of interest on a prospective loan.

Perhaps those who are planning Britain's relations with South-Eastern Europe after the war will read Mr. Easterman's book and remember that more powerful in alliance than sealed treaties is economic dependence. The assurance of a market for their products and of financial credit from an International Agricultural Bank will do more to win the peasantry of South-Eastern Europe than ten Atlantic Charters.

MAURICE EDELMAN

Can We Win the Peace? By PAUL EINZIG. *Macmillan.* 8s. 6d.

Mr. Einzig's peace-aims are a system of preventive economics through which Germany will be unable to start another war. He wants to dismantle German heavy industry, forbid a German machine-tool industry, re-orientate the trade-dependence of South-East Europe from Germany to the West, and to make these measures effective, he recommends splitting the Reich into smaller political units and their occupation by Allied troops until German economic disarmament has been completed. That is the logic of power-economics and Mr. Einzig very properly calls his proposals an "inverted New Order."

If we leave Germany her industry, he argues, she'll use it to start another war. We'll therefore restrict her to secondary industry and thus control all industry because secondary industry is derived from heavy industry. The Germans will be the poorer for this but that will be their retribution. The world will benefit because there won't be any more German wars.

The unattractiveness of Mr. Einzig's case is that, as the economist of Big Business (the "we" of his title) he sees only one possibility for the future: capitalist interests in a permanent state of war with each other, except for intervals of peace, when one set of interests has its heel on the neck of the other. Capitalism is, in fact, a self-fertilising organism with the seeds of war within it. Mr. Einzig's "inverted New Order" is little different in principle from Mr. Hitler's New Order.

Week-end Competitions

No. 658

Set by Thomas Smallbones

A stylist reveals his style even in telegrams. The usual prizes are offered for an exchange of telegrams over a dinner engagement between any of the following pairs (all-in-limit 200 words): Henry James and Hemingway; Auden and Browning; Walter Pater and James Hadley Chase; Sir Thomas Browne and Evelyn Waugh; Sterne and Stein; Gibbon and D. H. Lawrence; Wilde and Dr. Buchman; Harriet Wilson and T. S. Eliot; Whitman and Sir Max Beerbohm; Proust and Rochefoucauld.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, September 21.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 655

Set by G. W. Stonier

A magazine recently asked me if I would write 200 words on "The Most Awkward Moment of My Life." I wrote: "The most awkward moment of my life was undoubtedly the moment when I was born," but this wasn't 200 words, and it didn't appear to suit their scheme. Competitors, who are probably better at this than I am, are asked to provide their own most awkward moments, within the same word limit. It is best, by the way, to be truthful.

Report by G. W. Stonier

One competitor, D. W. Barker, prefaces his anecdote with some reflections on awkward moments. "'Awkward'," he says, "should delight Mr. Empson. In the sense of excruciating, the best stories are unprintable; in the *infra dig.* sense they are repressed out of memory; in the *faux pas* sense they are tedious; in the dangerous sense, non-existent in the truthful, undramatic life." And he goes on to say that his own most awkward moments have been in dreams. I am surprised that dream situations did not occur to other competitors; but perhaps such moments were ruled out by the fact that even the most awkward moments in dreams cease to be awkward when we wake up, whereas an unlucky remark at dinner may haunt for years.

Ordinary brick-dropping—which provided a large crop of entries—seems to me to rank low among awkward moments. We make the "awful" remark, whatever it may be; could bite our tongues out; beat a retreat; tell the story afterwards delightedly to others. A bad brick, of course, can be made worse by a succession of bricks, designed to cover up the first; but competitors do not seem to have experienced this sort of landslide. Perhaps, as Mr. Barker suggests, such happenings have been "repressed out of memory."

What competitors do remember and will confess to are comic accidents, harmless mistakes, little manifestations of grossness which—if genuinely representative—suggest that their lives must be wonderfully free from uneasiness. Towanbucket has a genial anecdote of a journey in a railway carriage alone with a pretty but formidably prim young lady. Not liking to stare, he found himself gazing at her reflection in the window-glass, and in the end winked at that; to find that *she* had been watching *him* in the same way. Not such an appalling moment, though, and it ended happily.

Far more awkward was the train journey of a little girl described by F. C. C. Two ladies began talking to one another about a child they knew who *had not been baptised*. The little girl who overheard this remark and noted the tone in which it was uttered, was herself unbaptised, having been brought up in a strict school of Victorian agnosticism. For the rest of the journey she suffered agonies wondering whether perhaps her parents had been wrong and she ought to have been baptised after all. When the ladies got out this horrible doubt vanished.

Besides F. C. C. and Towanbucket, several others were in the running for prizes: W. J. Taylor, Rachael Betu, J. W. Hurford, "Little Billee," S. Macpherson. There was not a very great deal to choose, but I recommend that the first prize be divided between D. L. M. and Sir Robert Witt, and that the second prize go to H. Asher.

FIRST PRIZE (1)

The story of the most awkward moment of my life is as stark in truth as in horror.

When a certain man, quite a new acquaintance, took me out to a dinner-dance, he accidentally and without noticing it flicked from his pocket a small hygienic apparatus—which was no concern of mine. It fell on a vacant chair at the further side of him, and I didn't like to call his attention to it. Remaining unseen by him, it was yet observed by almost every couple who danced past our table. Even the waiters blushed as they served us.

Each time we got up to dance I hoped and indeed prayed that someone would remove the inappropriate object, but it was always there on our return, and my companion seemed blind to it. When at last it caught his eye his mortification was most embarrassing. I fancy he lost his head. At any rate he did not for a long time avail himself of the opportunity I gave him for retrieving his property. Our evening never picked up, and I don't see what I could have done to save the situation. (D. L. M.)

(2)

AWKWARD INDEED, BUT TRUE.

Time: In the doubtfully Golden Age of large dinner parties and long trains.

Place: An immense Mayfair mansion.

The distinguished company, in ordered procession, is descending the wide staircase on its way to dine. Each gentleman has his lady (his hostess's choice, not his own) upon his arm. In the fashion of the day the ladies' skirts, of incredible length, trail far behind them as they pass down slowly and with dignity, sweeping the rich carpet from stair to stair.

Suddenly the horrid sound of tearing silk or other costly fabric breaks the solemn silence. The stately dowager on the stair below me turns in fury, clutching at her rent train. The lady I was escorting had trodden upon it. The procession halts; all eyes are directed on us.

At that moment, without a second's hesitation, my lady, in tones that could be heard by all, remarked, "I am glad you did that, Sir Robert, not I." Completely innocent, but crimsoned with shame, I could only stammer apologies to the dowager. To my lady I remained silent. What was there to say?

She is dead now. God rest her soul—and ready tongue. (SIR ROBERT WITT)

SECOND PRIZE

THE DUEL.

I am a staid old science master. Triggetts, the maths. master, and I went to the films the other day, and saw Wallace Beery in "The Big House." Now all men have their weaker moments, and after that, when we caught sight of each other, we would sometimes slip into doorways and pretend to shoot at each other with fountain pens.

I can spot Triggett's blue tweed coat a mile off. One day I was just coming out of the study when I just glimpsed a bit of blue tweed outside the door. It stopped and then moved slowly backwards. I prepared to give battle.

I realised he would expect my head to appear some 5½ feet from the ground, so I craftily lay down on the floor, and then popped my head round suddenly. "BANG!" I said, "BANG! BANG! BANG!" and found myself pointing a fountain pen at a powerful woman in a blue tweed coat and skirt who had come to discuss her son's future. (H. ASHER)

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PICTURE CORPORATION

INCREASED PROFIT

The fifteenth ordinary general meeting of the Associated British Picture Corporation, Limited, was held on September 3rd in London, Mr. A. G. Allen, D.S.O., M.C., the chairman, presiding.

The following is an extract from the statement by the chairman circulated with the report and accounts:—

The net profit of the group applicable to the corporation has increased by £214,405, from £192,263 to £406,666. The directors recommend a final dividend of 7½ per cent. actual, less tax, on the ordinary shares, making 15 per cent. for the year.

As a whole, the entertainment industry has made a splendid recovery from the effects of air-raids, and public demand for healthy recreation is continuing to assert itself. Motion pictures are generally acknowledged to be rendering a major contribution in supplying this essential service. Our cinemas have derived their full share from this improvement in business.

At no time has there been any interruption in our film supplies from American producers, and there is no indication that America's entry into the war will lead to curtailment in production for some time to come. Notwithstanding all difficulties, we have carried on our production activities at Welwyn Studios, and we intend to do our utmost to keep the studios in operation. We have secured several important screen properties, but no picture will be undertaken without careful analysis of its revenue-earning possibilities in comparison with cost.

It is gratifying to report that the trading results of the corporation during the current financial year have been fully maintained.

The report was adopted.

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